Our IUCC Leadership Retreat on July 23 was enjoyable and productive!

The Retreat offered leaders a chance to get better acquainted and do some team-building. During the second half, we gathered in breakout groups to discuss the 4 elements of the Strategic Plan. We talked about the progress we’ve made and what we still need to do.

Pastor Sarah and IUCC Treasurer Chuck Heath were on hand to make reports and provide context and support. The retreat was full of positivity and good ideas!

Photos provided by Tricia Aynes.
A Letter to the Congregation

Thank you to all who filled out the IUCC 2022 Congregational Survey conducted in July 2022. A total of 151 people responded. We sought your views on two issues: (1) preference for one vs. two Sunday services, and (2) whether or not to require masks in the sanctuary. In the interests of transparency, we are sharing a brief summary of the results here. This is what the preliminary results showed:

**Sunday Services**

Among those who indicated a preference for one versus two Sunday services, 68% of respondents preferred one service and 32% preferred two services. The key reasons given for preferring one service were low attendance, especially at the 11 a.m. service (mentioned by 40 respondents who preferred one service), potential for increased sense of community (mentioned by 27 respondents who preferred one service), and efficiency (mentioned by 14 respondents who preferred one service). The key reasons for preferring two services were schedule flexibility (mentioned by 25 respondents who preferred two services) and allowing for growth (mentioned by 9 respondents who preferred two services). While most respondents indicated a willingness to attend either an early service (9:30 or 10:00) or a later service (11:00), a non-trivial number were only willing or able to attend one. Choosing either one would exclude some members of the congregation.

We hear the desire for one service, but we also acknowledge that people like to have choices and some of them are dedicated to the second service. We don’t want to lose/displace members for whom the 11 a.m. service is the only viable option. Their needs must be considered as well. Given that 55% of survey respondents who attend in-person indicated they’d be interested in attending a contemporary service with a different worship style, Pastor Sarah is exploring what such a service might look like during the 11 a.m. timeslot. She and our ministries will work together to incorporate your other suggestions to make our church a more welcoming place for all.

**Masks**

About 55% of respondents preferred that IUCC allow individuals to choose whether to wear masks in the sanctuary. About 40% preferred that masks continue to be required until December 2022. The remainder preferred requiring masks at one service but not the other.

The Admin Board considered a number of factors and ultimately decided to keep the mask requirement in place through the end of December. However, we will continue to monitor local conditions and adjust policy as needed. Our reasoning was twofold:

- The most common variant of COVID is highly contagious, and we are in the middle of a major surge right now. This is a real health issue for some of our congregants. UCI just reinstated its mask mandate due to an upsurge in the variant. It seems prudent to continue our current mask policy to protect the health and safety of our members.
- We are worried about the most vulnerable in our congregation, some of whom are elderly and/or immune-compromised. A strong minority of respondents are telling us they would feel uncomfortable coming to church around people who are unmasked. We are caring and considerate people, and we should do everything we can to protect them. We believe it is worth it to ensure that all congregants feel comfortable and safe attending in-person services.

We are working to achieve consensus on what specific metrics of COVID spread will best guide our future mask policy.

In hope and optimism,

*Tricia Aynes, Moderator*

*Daniel Blackburn, Chair of the Administration Board*
We had fun at our 1st “Rainbow Connection” Potluck on July 21!

Photos courtesy of Harley Gimarino & Tricia Aynes
They say it’s just a show for fun
On Broadway (On Broadway)
But there is truth and light for all who hear.
Because if you just look for God
You’re gonna find that you’ll be awed
The Spirit sings in song for those with ears.

That’s God’s Way on Broadway!

Yes, we’ve been exploring God’s Way on Broadway this summer, recognizing that while Broadway is fun, there’s truth and light to be experienced for those with ears to hear. The Gospel is not limited to the Bible. It’s everywhere, even on Broadway! I know I’ve had fun and I hope you have too - after all, the music has been phenomenal! Week after week, I’ve been moved by the songs and the depth of emotion that our incredible musical community adds to the experience. It feels like we’re in the middle of each show we encounter! When we put our theological thinking caps on, we realize that we can look at the world and see God everywhere. We can hear messages that resonate with and expand upon the Gospel in our Bible; this challenges and invites us to listen to God’s still speaking voice everywhere.

If you’ve missed the first part of our series, you can always check them out online, and the good news is: we will be seeking the Gospel on Broadway through August as well. So get ready because we’ve got Les Miserables, Rent, Phantom of the Opera and Annie coming up this month! I hope you’ll agree that these creative and thoughtful worship experiences highlight the joy we experience at IUCC as well our unique progressive Christian perspective along with our talented musical community, of course! Consider inviting a friend to join us this month!

I want to express my gratitude to all of you who took the time to fill out the church survey. The survey had multiple goals as we attempted to reach out to our community and find out how we can connect with our IUCC family. The two major questions we wanted to address were: should we move from two services to one, and when should we remove our mask mandate? Check out the letter from our Moderator and Admin Board Chair which addresses details of the survey on page 2. While we recognized that a majority of people wanted to make masks optional, we had a number of people who felt comfortable with us keeping the mandate until December. Given that a large minority of people did not feel comfortable making masks optional, the board opted to care for the vulnerable among us and remain masked. They’ll re-address this issue in December unless a significant drop warrants reconsideration.

While a majority of people surveyed preferred one service, there were 32% of people who preferred two services. In keeping with our philosophy of listening to the minority, it doesn’t feel right to negate the feelings of 32% of the respondents. The research I’ve read demonstrates that moving from two services to one is not as simple as pouring one cup into another and having more contents in one container. Some of the people who wanted one service indicated a different time for that one service than others. So, we’d inadvertently displace people. We don’t want anyone to get lost, because everyone matters.

However, given the strong desire for one service, coupled with the interest in a contemporary service, we are contemplating how we might continue to serve everyone by offering one traditional service at 9:30 a.m. and a second contemporary service at 11 a.m. Dr. Christopher Peterson, our incredibly talented and dedicated music director, and Craig Tyrl, our creative and committed worship chair, and I have been in conversation about what this might look like. If you’re interested in joining the conversation, we’d love for you to help us imagine possibilities for a contemporary experience.

One thing that was clear was that our IUCC members want to have the experience of community. For some that’s about being in worship together, for others that’s about building relationships outside of the service. We would love to encourage you to attend our shared coffee hour at 10:30 a.m. to connect with friends - new and old – and to consider participating in any of the number of activities we have going on throughout each month. We have adult education opportunities - Tuesday Bible Study, Rev. Jerry’s new class on existentialism, and our adult Sunday School. Or consider joining us for the last “Under the Sails” on August 25 with “cocktails and mock-tails” or maybe you could join a comma group to develop deeper friendships or a ministry so that you can help make a difference in our church community and beyond.

Thank you for your care, your love, and your creativity! If this summer has taught me anything, it’s that the Spirit is creative, joyful and filled with beauty! We can be Christians who think, act, love, and have fun! I hope we can take this positive energy and apply it into our future together as we begin to dream about the new opportunities before us.

In love and joy,

Pastor Sarah
I hope you’ve all had a chance to take in the “Gospel on Broadway” series this summer! From *The Sound of Music* to *Jesus Christ Superstar* to *Godspell*, it’s been a fun ride as we sang along with some old favorites and listened to uplifting and energizing sermons. Even Jesus made a cameo appearance! Stay tuned as we revisit other wonderful musicals in August.

**Leadership Retreat**

IUCC is blessed to have extremely dedicated, hard-working volunteer leaders who contribute their time and skills to keeping our church programs and services running smoothly. It wouldn’t be possible for us to “keep all the balls in the air” without their devoted and loving support!

Church leaders had a productive and inspiring retreat on July 23 that provided an opportunity to get better acquainted and do some team-building. During the second half, we gathered in breakout groups to discuss the 4 elements of the Strategic Plan. We reported back to the larger group about the progress we’d made so far and brainstormed what we still needed to do. Many thanks to all who helped and participated, especially to Cesar Sangalang for facilitating the discussion, to Chuck Heath and Pastor Sarah for providing updates, and to Alex and Jon Ingall for assisting with coffee and clean up. Much appreciated.

**Potluck events “Under the Sails”**

If you haven’t attended any of these marvelous events, you’ve been missing out! The month of May featured “Sipping Under the Sails,” June featured “Solstice Under the Sails,” and July featured “Brunch Under the Sails.” The last such gathering for the summer is set for August 25 and will be called “Mocktails/Cocktails Under the Sails.” Watch your e-blasts for further details on how YOU can participate in this opportunity to enjoy good food and great company. This will be an evening potluck event and will be open to all.

**Rainbow Connection**

We met a lot of wonderful people at the recent OC Pride event, and we wanted to invite them to come join us for some fun and fellowship. Our *Rainbow Connection* gathering on July 21 was especially heart-warming and special as we welcomed old friends and new and shared stories and laughter. I hope this is the first of many such gatherings for the LGBTQ+ community.

**Congregational Survey**

The preliminary results of the Congregational Survey are out, and you can read the letter from Daniel Blackburn (Chair of the Admin Board) and me on page 2. We appreciate your willingness to share your thoughts and opinions with us. We wanted to get an idea of what you were thinking, and we are grateful for your candor and honesty. The results make clear that we are not in agreement on everything, and some folks would like to see some changes.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to IUCC Treasurer Chuck Heath and Congregational Rep Shanthis Nataraj for their careful and professional approach to the wording and design of the survey, which was a masterpiece of information-gathering without bias. They made sure the survey avoided leading questions and remained neutral throughout. The survey was intended to help educate and inform the Admin Board about congregational preferences as we continue doing our best to navigate how to move forward in these uncertain times.

Because IUCC has a long and proud history of giving voice to the rights of the marginalized as well as to the majority, it is important for us to weigh a variety of factors before making decisions that will affect the whole body. While church leaders are listening and trying to take everyone’s view into account, we must take care not to displace or dismiss the people in the minority if we can help it. Each voice matters, and it will not be possible to please everyone. So please bear with us as we study the survey results and try to make wise and thoughtful decisions for the future of our beloved congregation. We have no crystal ball.

**Pastor Sarah’s Installation will be September 11**

A pastoral installation is a joyful rite of the church where a minister is officially placed into her role as pastor of the congregation. Even though Pastor Sarah has been here for some time, her installation has been delayed due to the pandemic. We’re excited to welcome back beloved IUCC pastors the Rev. Dr. Paul Tellstrom and the Rev. Fred Plumer. Pastor Fred will preach at this special service. Please come - all IUCC members and guests are cordially invited to attend the ceremony!

In hope and optimism,

Tricia
July 24 featured Leader Installation & a “Godspell” theme!

Leader Installation at 1st Service: Diane Rust, Dave Smith, Steve Goetz, Chuck Heath, Tom Mason, Craig Tyrl, Cesar Sangalang, Keith Boyum, Renae Boyum, Connie Jones, Tricia Aynes, Kathi Smith, Jon Ingal, Robinmarie McClement, Daniel Blackburn, & Jeanne Maag

Leader Installation at 2nd Service: Pat Sauter, Craig Tyrl, Cesar Sangalang, Felicity Figueroa, Alex Ingal, Tricia Aynes, & Connie Jones

Cesar Sangalang was worship leader

An awesome sermon by Craig Tyrl

Jenna McCarty's solo was a hit

Eric Houston as Jesus

Wendy Wiebach and backup singers
Hello Everyone!

Many of you have heard of my ambitious plan to redesign the website, so I wanted to take some time and provide information towards that end. So first, why does the website need updated? This is a two-part answer.

First and foremost, the Strategic Plan wants us to be more digital friendly as that is the future. Please think of 5 successful companies (mine are Apple, Google, Intel, Yelp, Amazon). Ok, now visit their home page. What do they all have in common? Their home pages are big, image filled, low on paragraphs but plenty of one liners and clickable things. Now visit iucc.org and scroll down. While our webpage might look great, it is outdated.

Second reason for the changes is because our website is...well expansive. Did you know that there are 79 different active webpages on our website? Four of them offer methods to donate and three of them offer information to people new to the church. Also, much of the coding on some of these pages uses legacy coding. This means that a major change in the page layout will make everything crazy looking unless the website is restored to a prior version, or the code is manually fixed. This means the website will greatly benefit from a ‘reboot’ where each page is redone, using current html code and everything is consolidated to where there is only one place to donate money instead of four.

I do have an outline for what to expect and as this project progresses, I will tell you all about what has changed and what is about to change in future Newsletters. You probably won’t see a major, noticeable, change to the website until late 2022 and completion is tentative to July 2023. The project will take place in 5 phases.

Phase 1 – (Current Phase) Planning, quick website fixes, general information updates

Phase 2 – Website mapping, consolidation, and website software exploration (Basically what is possible)

Phase 3 – Front page redesign (basic), major page redesign (new here, preschool, donations, etc.)

Phase 4 – Secondary page redesign and/or coding update (Ministries, documents, contact us, etc.)

Phase 5 – Front page enhancement (to match all other changes), website stress test (trying to break it)

In no way will the new website (when completed) look as good as a large multimillion dollar company with the skill level of an electrical engineer updating the website as a volunteer. However, I feel I will at least be able to put the website in a position where, if we ever did retain a professional, they wouldn’t have to re-invent the wheel to improve our digital image.

Please email comments/questions/concerns/website problems to TalkToMe@iucc.org.

J. Alex Ingal (He/Him/His)
Communications Co-Chair
The Mission of the Legacy Circle is to contribute to the long-term financial sustainability of IUCC:

- through will or trust bequests
- designating IUCC as a beneficiary of an IRA, 401(K), annuity or other retirement account
- designating IUCC as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy
- through other gifts such as cash, marketable securities and marketable real estate

A gift to the IUCC Legacy Circle by members and friends of IUCC will ensure that the goals and dreams of IUCC continue for future generations.

IUCC Legacy Circle FAQs

What is planned giving?
A planned gift can be made to IUCC through your will or trust, retirement funds, and certain life insurance policy arrangements. Planned gifts are almost always funded from accumulated resources or assets rather than income and are typically planned for during the donor’s lifetime but not actually received until after the donor’s death. Planned giving enables individuals to make sound financial plans that consider their own needs and those of family, as well as commitments to church and charities.

Why are planned gifts important to IUCC?
By including IUCC in your planned giving, your gift will contribute to the long-term financial sustainability of IUCC for generations to come.

What is the Legacy Circle and how can I join?
Anyone who establishes a legacy gift to IUCC and has completed a Confidential Bequest Intention form is automatically made a member of the IUCC Legacy Circle. It is our means of recognizing your lasting commitment to IUCC. If you wish to be an anonymous member, you may do so. If you have already made a legacy commitment to IUCC in your estate plan, we would love to hear from you so we are able to thank you for your generosity, make you a member of the Legacy Circle, and use the information to assist in our long-term financial planning.

What types of legacy gifts are currently supported?
The Legacy Circle currently supports these types of legacy gifts, including:
- Bequests to IUCC in your will or revocable trust.
- Designating IUCC as a beneficiary of your IRA, 401(k), annuity or other retirement account.
- Designating IUCC as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy.
- Other gifts such as cash, marketable securities and marketable real estate.

Bequests
A bequest is a provision in your will or revocable trust designating a fixed dollar amount, a percentage of your assets, or the remainder of your estate, be given to IUCC upon settlement of your estate. Most bequests are fully revocable while you are alive. Please consult an attorney with respect to the specific language requirements for your will or trust.
Retirement Plan Beneficiary Designations

You can designate IUCC as a beneficiary of your IRA, 401(k), 403(b) plan, or annuity for a specific amount or a percentage of total assets. Such gifts can save on income and estate taxes. Retirement assets are subject to income taxes when paid out to a taxable entity. In contrast, nonprofit organizations such as IUCC are eligible to receive such assets without facing income tax liability. Common approaches include:

- Designating IUCC as a primary beneficiary (1 to 100 percent) of your retirement plan account.
- Designating a specific amount to be paid to IUCC before the remainder is directed to family or other individuals.
- Designating IUCC as a contingent or secondary beneficiary to receive the balance only if a loved one, such as a primary beneficiary, doesn’t survive you.

Life Insurance Beneficiary Designations

You can designate IUCC as a beneficiary of all or a portion of your life insurance benefits. A traditional life insurance policy (with an accumulated cash value) can be a valuable asset. If the original purpose for the protection no longer applies, such as to educate children now grown or to provide financial security for a spouse now deceased, a life insurance policy can be redirected to help support a charitable cause such as IUCC. To implement your wishes, please contact your life insurance agency or company and complete the needed change-of-beneficiary form. You may wish to contact an attorney to ensure you are using the correct language.

Are there any restrictions on the types of gifts I can make?

It is preferred that legacy gifts to IUCC be made without designation or restriction as to the use of the funds. IUCC may not accept gifts that are overly restrictive or difficult to administer. The types of gifts that are acceptable include cash, marketable securities, and marketable real estate. Please note that the Legacy Circle Bequest Intention Form requests that you indicate whether your gift shall be unrestricted or restricted.

How do I make a Legacy Gift to IUCC?

1. Talk with your advisors and family. Decide on the kind and amount of gift you want to leave to IUCC. Will you leave a set dollar amount or a percentage of certain assets?
2. Complete the Confidential Bequest Intention Form found at https://www.iucc.org/bequestintent/ to let us know what you are considering and whether you need assistance. While IUCC cannot offer financial or tax advice regarding your gift, we will be happy to answer your questions about the different gift types. We also want to be sure IUCC can accept your gift as you want to designate it. We may not be able to accept certain kinds of real property, or funds designated for a very narrow purpose. Of course, your information will be held in strict confidence, depending on your wishes.
3. Execute your legacy gift by doing one or more of the following:
   1. Work with your attorney to add or change language in your will or revocable trust.
   2. Change your retirement plan and/or life insurance beneficiary forms.
   3. Update the Confidential Bequest Intention form found at https://www.iucc.org/bequestintent/
      1. Email the form to: iucc@iucc.org or
      2. Send the form to Church Administrator, Irvine United Congregational Church, 4915 Alton Parkway, Irvine, CA 92604.
      3. Details on your legacy giving will be kept confidential and will be kept for the church’s record-keeping only.
4. We will welcome you as a member of the Legacy Circle! Determine whether or not you want your name to be listed with others or kept confidential. Please note that the form includes a checkbox to designate whether you are willing to have your name published as a member of the Legacy Circle. We recognize members by name only, and do not disclose the amount or nature of your gift. Please notify IUCC if you make future changes or adjustments to your legacy gift.
5. Upon settlement of your estate, your funds will be given to IUCC according to your wishes, and will serve the needs and activities of IUCC for years to come!

Thank you...for your generosity and commitment to keeping IUCC strong and vital for generations to come!
THE MEANING OF LEGACY

Several years ago, we were asked to make a donation to the IUCC Building Fund. We said “YES,” as did so many other members and friends of IUCC! As the capital campaign named “Embracing our Future” was underway, we were asked to reflect on the idea of LEGACY. At the Congregational Meeting in February of 2016 when we voted to move forward with the construction of much-needed office and meeting space, Keith said this:

“Now it is our turn to exercise foresight, to offer legacy and to take a worthwhile risk. We can now touch the future with our gifts and support. And three or so decades from now, it may come to pass that those who gather here will pause and reflect with appreciation what we did today.”

Now in 2022, we have a new opportunity to think about the idea of legacy. It is a planned giving program, developed by the Fund Development Committee and endorsed by the IUCC Administration Board. This is The Legacy Circle.

And we have joined the circle. In our family trust, we have a provision to make a gift to IUCC when both of us are gone. So - Why? Why would we include IUCC in our estate plans? Well, here is our answer:

We have included IUCC in our estate plans for the same reason we supported the capital campaign a few years ago. And that is: to touch the future, to ensure that the values we embrace continue to be lifted up - to advance inclusion, to welcome community, and to promote justice. For us, these are vital and important values that will ensure a meaningful future for IUCC!

The powerful words from Micah 6:8 say it best - What does the Lord require of us, but to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

- Keith & Renae Boyum

ENSURE YOUR LEGACY

Like Keith and Renae Boyum at left, Jeff and I were asked to make a donation to the IUCC Building Fund years ago. Significantly impressed with the amount of social justice work that we saw IUCC doing, we participated gladly in the capital campaign, wanting the church to flourish and grow. It has been very rewarding to see the good use that all the new spaces have been put to, making the church even more functional and vibrant.

Now 12 year members of the church, it is that same desire to see the church grow and flourish well into the future that motivates Jeff and me to add our names to the Legacy Circle, having just updated our trust and will to reflect our desire to leave a bequest to IUCC upon our passing. Though never a subject that everyone likes to speak about, I strongly encourage everyone, regardless of age, to make sure that they have a will and/or trust in place to ensure that their wishes are carried out. Your remaining family will be so glad that you did.

With the current state of affairs, the world needs more than ever to have institutions like IUCC, with all its important missions, continue to be a beacon of hope for generations to come. By joining the Legacy Circle, Jeff and I hope to make that better future manifest by helping to keep IUCC financially strong and sustainable.

Please join us and those listed below in doing the same by filling out the confidential Legacy Circle Bequest Intention form whose link is provided on the previous page.

In continued service,
Jeff Benedick and Duane Vajgrt, MD

LEGACY CIRCLE SCROLL

Anonymous
Anonymous
Keith & Renae Boyum
Glenna Matthews
William A. Lawrence & Jeffrey L. Stuckhardt
Jeffrey Benedick & Duane Vajgrt, MD
Adult Sunday School looks at History of Early Christianity

Beginning August 7, Adult Sunday School will continue the DVD series by Bart Erman on the history of early Christianity. This four-week segment will be led by Bil Aulenbach.

Mission & Service Second Harvest Food Bank collection in August

The Mission & Services August Collection is dedicated to the Second Harvest Food Bank OC. We want to thank everyone who was so generous last year when we did this collection. We really helped them feed those in need in OC.

As explained in our last year collection request, Second Harvest FBOC has completely changed the way they do their business to be sure those in need in OC are well fed. Originally this change was required due to the Pandemic, but these new methods have worked so well they are continuing them going forward. The need is still great but access to healthy food is even more available at their partner locations due to these new practices.

Food drives are no longer the way they collect food. Grocery gift cards and monetary donations are the preferred methods so they can distribute healthy food throughout the county or buy the foods they need to supplement the food donated by the leading grocery stores.

Your contributions of gift cards from the following stores would be greatly appreciated: Ralphs, Stater Brothers, Albertsons, Vons, or Smart & Final.

Please put the gift cards in an envelope and either mail it to the church marked to the attention of Mission & Services or drop it in the office when they are open. Make sure you indicate the amount of the gift card.

The need continues to be great for OC Community. Please give what you can.

Thank you from the Mission & Services Ministry

PS—SHFBOC is holding their first “Walk to Feed OC” on 9/11 at Tanaka Farms. To read more about it please go to feedoc.org/walk

Existentialism - Clarifying & Strengthening our Progressive Christian Faith

Presented by Reverend Doctor Jerry von Talge
with Pastor Sarah Halverson-Cano

Pastor Sarah joins Rev. Jerry in this exploration of Existentialism and Progressive Christianity

REFRESH – DEEPEN

Save the dates
Four sessions:
August 10, 17, 24, & 31, 2-3:30 PM
or
August 11, 18, 25 & Sept. 1, 7-8:30 PM
(Zoom provided but in-person preferred)

Enjoy a new kind of IUCC Adult Ed. class
• Interactive with more class discussion
• Content rich
• Mentally stimulating

Session one -
Existentialism and Progressive Christianity
• A striking similarity
• A review of the eight points of progressive Christianity
• The strengths and weaknesses of existentialism
• How existentialism enhances and strengthens Progressive Christianity
• What does it mean to be like Jesus? (Spong)
Join us for a fun-filled evening with delicious desserts and entertainment too. IUCC is blessed with so much first class talent, and tonight you will not be seeing any of it. In fact, this night is dedicated to our... well... less talented folks who are willing to put themselves to the task of entertainment that we celebrate tonight! So we encourage those of you who play the kazoo or have nothing in mind that we are hoping to cast. IN FACT... IF you are willing to put yourself into Fellowship Ministry’s trustful hands, we will cast you into an act compatible to you and will help you to shine like the star you are!

Sign up to bring your favorite dessert to share and we will have the home made ice cream chilling when you get here! A wonderful night of Fun, Fellowship and Hilarious Entertainment for all ages from some of the most courageous members you may ever know! This event was rescheduled to accommodate other events.

- Robinmarie McClement
Sponsored by IUCC Fellowship Ministry

In case you haven’t been here in person for a while, we want to let you know that the Admin Board has endorsed the return of handshakes/handholding, red books, and offering plates. Craig Tyrl and his intrepid team of deacons were quick to implement the new policy!
“Making your way in the world today
Takes everything you’ve got
Taking a break from all your worries
Sure would help a lot
Wouldn’t you like to get away?”

The summer is no exception as our world moves very quickly and the lazy hazy
days of the past are not likely to come around again. So, it is up to us all to make
time and create space for rest and renewal and connection. Belonging to a church
community is one of the best ways to do that! We have already had a few events
this summer that lent themselves to opportunities to connect and get to know
people here. It’s been nice to get together again and take a break from our worries
OR have someone to share them with.

There are a few more gatherings coming up and we hope you will join us for one or all of them before the summer is
over. There is certainly something happening for everyone, and there is so much joy in being together in person again!
Many of our events are outside and all of them are done with safe space in mind.

The “Under the Sails Breakfast” was an incredible affair and the food was spectacular! Many thanks to Debra and Wayne
Banwell (shown in photo at top right) and their culinary skills as they made up fresh omelets for us. So many of our folks
brought delicious food to share and the dishes were amazing! Thank you! We enjoyed good fellowship and door prizes
too, so fun was had by all.

“Sometimes you want to go
Where everybody knows your name
And they’re always glad you came
You want to be where you can see
Our troubles are all the same
You want to be where everybody knows your name”

IUCC is an ideal place for that and we hope you will join us for our next Fellowship event later this month. See you at the
Ice Cream Social!

If you would like to join our Fellowship Team to help us plan, promote and put on these events, email Robinmarie,
mcclement@gmail.com. You won’t be disappointed at how much fun and good works we do!
IUCC women are invited to a private tour of the historic Hortense Miller home and garden in Boat Canyon, Laguna Beach, led by docent Debra Banwell, on Saturday, August 27. The Hortense Miller garden was established in 1959 and covers 1.5 acres in upper Boat Canyon. The garden includes a wide range of plants that can be grown in Southern California coastal areas and inspires visitors with its natural beauty.

The tour will begin sharply at 9:45 a.m. at the garden, 22511 Allview Terrace, Laguna Beach, and will last approximately two hours. A donation of $10 to $15 is suggested. Afterwards, join the sisterhood for an optional lunch on your own at Erth Café (formerly The Cottage) at 308 North Coast Highway, across from the Laguna Art Museum. Parking is limited at the garden, so carpooling is advised.

The maximum group size is 10, but we will keep a waiting list and investigate getting another docent if possible. Sign up on or before August 15 at iuccwomen22@gmail.com and provide your name, email, and phone number. Your reservation will be promptly confirmed or placed on a waiting list. -- Laura Long

Hello Everyone!

Have you been enjoying the yummy treats during coffee hour? Of course, you have! If you have not, well you are missing out! Did you know, that with minimal effort, you could provide useful assistance and variety for coffee hour? Well, you CAN.

While coffee hour is designed to be ran and maintained by a single person, more hands are very helpful and there are many ways you can help, but hosting and donations help the most. You can learn about all the ways you can assist at https://tinyurl.com/IUCCCoffeeHour

Hosting
Are you part of a ministry with an event happening in the future? Why not HOST? Hosting has been made simple, all I need from you is for you to stand behind the table during coffee hour and smile. Hosting is a good way to briefly say hi to many people, including the new people! You can shamelessly tell them who you are and/or what you are representing (if anything). Plus, by Hosting, I do not have to do it so I can go wander off and relax.

Food Donations
I am sure we all love cookies, muffins, tarts, and everything else I make but did you know that people also like fruit? Yea, I know. Fruit. Coffee Hour always takes donations. If you bought too many pineapples, cut some up and donate them! You can donate anything you want as long as you donate it in a form that can be single served. Please email me to ask more about what is and isn’t appropriate to donate.

Thank you for enjoying my treats and I love to hear feedback/treat ideas.

J. Alex Ingal (He/Him/His)
Hospitality Chair (jalexingaliucc@gmail.com)
Hello, Past & Future Walkers --

The 36th Annual OC AIDS Walk is coming back in person again this year! We have a new date and venue: Saturday, October 22 at Mile Square Park in Fountain Valley. This year’s Walk will include a lively jaunt around the park, games, live entertainment, food and more: in other words, a day of fun and fundraising that you won’t want to miss!

All proceeds from the Walk benefit the individuals and their families impacted by HIV/AIDS in Orange County. Money raised will support critically important programs including food pantry, transportation, housing, emergency financial assistance, mental health counseling, kids & family programs, support groups and HIV education & prevention services.

I know we can once again make IUCC Walk the Walkers the Number One faith-based team! Here’s the link to sign up for Team IUCC: [https://donate.radianthealthcenters.org/team/435277](https://donate.radianthealthcenters.org/team/435277). Just register, send out emails to everyone you know and start bringing in the bucks for this very worthwhile effort. Invite your friends and family to walk, too: the more, the merrier!

So, put on your walking shoes and get ready to work up a sweat for a great cause at the 2022 OC AIDS Walk!!

Peace,

Felicity Figueroa

she/her/hers

IUCC AWOC Team Captain

949-280-3165

Facebook event page: [https://www.facebook.com/events/423295919669083](https://www.facebook.com/events/423295919669083)

Sign-up/donation page for Team IUCC: [https://donate.radianthealthcenters.org/team/435277](https://donate.radianthealthcenters.org/team/435277)
Sunday School is hosting a special character series for summer!

For **responsibility**, Ms. Myrna created an obstacle course! Pairs worked together to communicate with code words like “mario jump” for super jumps or working out other signals to get through!

To be **super** for Jesus Christ Superstar week, the kids learned about Jesus as Superhero with Ms. Sandy and how to be super in daily life with others!

For **courage**, the kids reimagined how to approach scary situations with Ms. Lauren and Mr. Eric and painted stones to feel and share courage.

The kids learned about **respect** by using stickers to share what it looks like, sounds like, and feels like to them!
Our Children had a Blast at Summer Spirit Day on August 30

Photos courtesy of Lauren Louie

Summer Spirit Day provided our children with opportunities to “Walk With Jesus” through service, music, games, and fun. Many thanks to our adult helpers for all their great ideas, patience, and creativity in making it such a fun and memorable day for all!
Friendship: Something was Amiss

by Vivian Elaine Johnson

“God really did something wonderful when he made chocolate,” my friend said as she bit into a slice of rich, moist chocolate cake. I’d stopped by to bring her a lunch of egg salad sandwiches and the saliva-producing chocolate cake. Most importantly, I came to have a long-awaited visit after our isolation due to the Covid pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, for several years we had a breakfast meeting every other week at a restaurant located halfway between our homes. Our friendship of over fifty years was based on sharing our lives. We talked, we listened, we comforted, we laughed – sometimes hilariously. Being with Rose felt like being enveloped in a warm, soft shawl after being out in stormy weather.

When I called Rose that morning to remind her that I was coming and bringing lunch, she replied, “Oh, I hope I can find my mind before you come.” I noticed on previous calls that her memory was failing. What would I find today?

Rose’s grandson, who lived with her to provide safety and care, greeted me and assisted her out into the garden where we would have lunch. I felt relieved that her appearance was pretty much the same: a head of permed white hair and loose, blue clothing that covered her large, arthritic body. She looked like a giant blueberry taking tiny steps in sturdy shoes. She was still the same person, my friend Rose.

She looked at me and said, “This is my grandson,” then turning to him asked, “Are you John’s son?” He assured her that he was. He added that he would be in the house and that she could call him on her cellphone when she was ready to come back inside.

We sat in Rose’s front yard in faded plastic lawn chairs by a table made of a tree stump. We were surrounded by foliage, potted plants, and butterflies, an idyllic setting. One clue that things were amiss was that several of the flower pots held dead flowers. Rose, who had been an expert gardener, would not have allowed that in the past.

She was so delighted with the lunch I brought. “I don’t remember when I ate. Maybe it was yesterday. This is so good. Where did you get it?”

“I got it from the kitchen at the facility where I live. They prepare all our food. You ate in our dining room with me a couple of times.”

Rose was really into the food, savoring every bite. “Where did you get this food?” she asked again. I repeated my previous answer.

“I don’t know why my grandson is here.” A long pause. “I don’t know for sure, but I think he might live here.” She focused on her sandwich, then looked up and queried, “Where did you get this food?”

I tried to pull her attention to some of our memories of times past, times when we baked together, planned parties, and went on trips. She stayed with each memory for a few moments, then moved on to “Where did you say you got this food?”

I asked her if she prepared her own meals to which she replied, “I don’t think so. Somebody brings me food. It might be my son.” Then with blank eyes, “I’m not sure.” When she finished eating, I tried to move to another topic.

Ignoring my attempts to converse about our children and grandchildren, Rose said, “Have I told you how happy I am to see you?” Her eyes were soft and smiley in her puffy, cloud-like face. It appeared that she was genuinely pleased that I was there. Suddenly, from the mist of her memory she said, “One time I went with you to the cemetery to visit Todd’s grave.” She took a tissue from her pocket, dabbed her eyes, and gasped, “It was heartbreaking watching you pull weeds from around your son’s gravestone.” We sat in silence, simply sharing tears of remembrance.

Rose changed the subject, “I wonder if I still drive. Do I?”

“Friendship” continued on Page 21
Turning our Grief into Joy: How do we go from Darkness to Light in the Midst of our Current Political Divisiveness?
by Dr. Eduardo Jesús Arismendi-Pardi, Adult Education Ministry and Diversity & Inclusion Ministry

I recently wrote about being “table flipping angry” as a result of the reversal of the 50 year old precedent that protected a woman’s right to end a pregnancy. In my view, the decision by the U.S. Supreme Court is just the beginning of reversing protective measures for those who are poor, voiceless, afflicted, and who—by and large—are people of color. I am still “table flipping angry.” I believe that putting a child up for adoption is not a viable solution for many because that option has serious negative psychological implications. The poor and voiceless will ultimately suffer and bear the cost of the decision of our mostly White, affluent, privileged U.S. Supreme Court. What hurts most is the fact that the very people who advocate for having no restrictions over firearms, which are human-made instruments that violate the sanctity of life as recently evidenced in Uvalde, Texas, are the same people who advocate for stripping a woman’s choice to end a pregnancy. I am still filled with grief that the recent killing in Texas claimed the lives of mostly LatinX victims.

For me personally, it is very difficult to be happy with our country’s current ethos of oppression, hatred, and political polarization. So how can I turn my sense of darkness into light? How can I turn my grief to joy? Well, I have neither easy nor comforting answers. However, I have found some comfort in the words of the Psalmist “… Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning” (Psalm 30:5, NRSV). This matter is a test of my faith and my hope, but that alone will yield little fruit. I believe the answer lies in activism, and this is an opportunity for many of us to organize and do what we can to live with this new reality. In my discernment about this reversal, I found some comfort in the Resurrection story, regardless of how one understands it, whether be it a metaphor or not. This concept is very much about the disciples’ fear, grief, and pain as a result of Jesus’s crucifixion. I imagine there are many women who are experiencing fear, grief, pain, and even anger right now. The Resurrection story is familiar to all of us; the disciples were released from their fears and anxieties upon experiencing the Resurrected Jesus. For me, it is not important whether or not this is a metaphor.

We all have experienced resurrections from terrible situations in our journey. While there are no easy answers to deal with our sense of darkness, we can find some joy by exercising gratitude or having an attitude of gratitude.

Having an attitude of gratitude is not about being happy with what is going on in our current society. Of course not! But for me, having an attitude of gratitude is about looking at life and finding something that brings me an experience of joy. But how do I do this? Well, I have found it to be quite helpful to write a few things that I am grateful for every day. This is something that my wife, Cheryl, and I do everyday and it only takes a few minutes. I would humbly and respectfully recommend writing three things you may be grateful for every day for one month. Share your gratitude list with someone you trust or someone you love. Since my last article about being “table flipping angry,” I have written 3-10 things each day for which I am grateful. For starters, we are not alone; many of us can share in our grief and in doing so we could perhaps cut our pain in half. I am indeed grateful for IUCC, for the people that attend this church and the friends that I have made (my list is quite large to list everyone’s name but you know you are on that list—thank you for welcoming me and accepting me regardless of where I am on my journey). Many of us shared common values and each of us is doing the best we can to heal and cope. I also draw much comfort from the reality that light is the byproduct of darkness in terms of the Creation story regardless of how you interpret it, whether as a metaphor or not. In my personal experience, I have read about seasons of light or enlightenment as a result of being in conditions of darkness.

Many of us have good relationships, good homes, successful children and grandchildren, good pensions, good jobs, godly friends, a wonderful church, and we also have many opportunities to be of service to others who are less fortunate than we are. I also believe that we can turn darkness into light and grief into joy by being of service. I have found it helpful to hang on to the words I once read that “life is like a boomerang” which, for me, is one way to say “we reap what we sow.” I believe, and I have actually experienced, that when we put out something good it comes right back to us. Spending a few minutes to jot down a few things we can be grateful for can help us to find some joy in our grief and some light in our darkness. So now that we are where we are regarding our own grief, pain, suffering, and even anger, what are some things that you can be grateful for today? Would you be willing to write down several things you are grateful for and share them with someone you trust, love, or have affinity with? What are some things that you can do to be active in fighting against oppression as you continue your own journey and as you are led by acting justly, being merciful, and walking with the God of your understanding (cf. Micah 6:8)?
Overcoming the Narcissism Trap and the Subjectivity Trap: The Importance of Building IUCC Community and Solidarity

by The Reverend Doctor Jerry von Talge
Member, Diversity & Inclusion Ministry and Member, Advocates for Peace & Justice Ministry

IUCC Community

On July 21st, I enjoyed the “Rainbow Connection” potluck dinner “under the sails,” a fellowship with LGBTQ+ members of our congregation. This gathering was not only supportive of our LGBTQ+ members; it also reinforced our IUCC sense of community and resulting solidarity. Our church strength and effectiveness depends upon the solidarity of our community.

Last Sunday was a continuation of our “Gospel on Broadway” worship services, featuring the musical Jesus Christ Superstar. The music was outstanding and deeply moving, matched by Pastor Sarah’s excellent sermon. The worship service brought us together. We become one in celebration, worshipping God. Jesus Christ came into our lives in a new and dramatic way. There was a feeling of community solidarity as we shared a moving experience, being the body of Christ, worshipping God. We must do all that we can to continue growing in solidarity, with each person feeling they are an important part of a vibrant community, focused on an important mission.

Overcoming the narcissism trap as a Progressive Christian

Existentialism and Progressive Christianity focus on the subjective experience of the individual. The Progressive Christian continues to search subjectively for truth in a lifelong journey. Existentialism focuses on the subjective experience of individuals and their learning as they create their lives and their true selves. Progressive Christianity places a high value on a continual search as opposed to fixed configurations of information, such as doctrines, creeds, and even theology and Christology. It is a do-it-yourself faith.

With the focus on subjective experience and decision-making, there is a corresponding focus on the self, who is receiving the experience and making decisions. This can lead to narcissism, or to a lesser degree, self-centeredness. This self-centeredness or narcissism can block information from outside of one’s self and can separate the individual from society so that a dichotomy is created. With this dichotomy there can be a lack of participation and cooperation, rejecting the values and rules of society.

There can even be a development of anti-social behavior, some critics claim.

There will always be a dynamic tension between the individual self and society, or community. There will always be a moving balance. Personal identity, values, and a code of conduct must be maintained. So must community or societal values and standards be maintained. If those standards are not maintained, individuals will suffer, and their lives will not be fulfilled. The self cannot exist and grow in a void.

Overcoming the subjectivity trap as a Progressive Christian

Both Progressive Christians and existentialism followers have a subjective focus. There is always a possibility of getting lost in a subjective relativism that has no anchor or foundation. With no anchor or foundation parameters, there is nothing fixed to start from. The self becomes a meaningless construct, with nothing solid for the self to relate to.

The development of the self has to be defined in relational terms. A child develops a personality according to how the world around them - especially parents, teachers, friends and others - respond to them. A child does not develop a personality in a vacuum. Progressive Christians cannot develop their personal faith in a vacuum. There have to be external parameters for any definition of self or of a personal faith. Individuals have to be supported by a community. There must be some kind of dynamic interaction, with each entity reinforcing the other in a reciprocal relationship.

On their lifelong journey, Progressive Christians searching for spiritual truth need a supportive community. The community, in order to be vibrant and effective, must be nourished and supported by the individual members who joined together in solidarity. Here at IUCC, we must continually find new ways to build and support our community in order to sustain our members in their spiritual journeys. We must continually find new ways to create a resonance between individual spiritual journeys and journey in solidarity as a congregation, fulfilling the mission of our church. The church must provide individual
Her eyes questioned me. “I wonder whose car that is in my driveway.” I replied that I didn’t know and I thought it would be best if she didn’t drive. “Oh, maybe. Have I told you how happy I am to see you?” she repeated. I assured her that I was grateful to see her as well.

When it was time for me to leave, Rose tried to call her grandson on her cellphone to ask him to help her back into the house. She stared at the phone and poked at it with her crooked finger. “How do you use this? I can’t figure it out. I used it yesterday, but I can’t seem to do it now. Something is wrong with my mind today.” Somehow, through mental telepathy perhaps, her grandson appeared.

Rose could not get out of the chair. She grunted, pushed, used her two canes, rested, then with every ounce of strength she had and with her grandson’s assistance, she stood. Whew. I felt worn out from her physical effort. She looked at me and said, “Did I tell you how happy I am to see you?”

I gave her a hug, patted her arm, and said, “I love you, Rose.” With a gentle smile, she said, “Can we do this again? Where did you get that good food? Next time, I can drive to see you.” Her grandson walked her into the house where her two dogs -- one a little guy and the other as large and gangly as a big, black, teenaged bear -- greeted her with barks, jumps and sloppy kisses.

I walked across the lawn to my car, tears accompanying each step. Rose’s kind nature and love for me was still evident, but no matter how idyllic the setting, we could no longer have the deep, rich conversations we once enjoyed. I missed my friend.

“Friendship” article cont’d. from page 18

“Overcoming” article cont’d. from page 20

members with the opportunity to balance their interior selves with their outside parameters, receiving feedback and information.

Existentialists who have overcome subjective relativism and narcissism
Soren Kierkgaard, Simone de Beauvoir and Martin Heidegger conceptualize the self in relational terms, overcoming the problem of subjective relativism and narcissism (and self-centeredness). An individual’s identity is created within the context of the world — society — through encounters. Heidegger asserts that we are always essentially and inescapably social beings. An outstanding existentialist, de Beauvoir states that an individual seeking their “engaged freedom,” must also, at the same time, seek the freedom of others. This concern for others will create community and foster solidarity, creating a bridge between the individual and the community. She has resolved the problem of a dichotomy, developing a bridge between the individual and society. “Engaged freedom” is a product of Sartre’s thinking, expanded by de Beauvoir in her book, The Ethics of Ambiguity.

Although these existentialists have resolved the problem of subjective relativism and narcissism, there remains a dynamic tension and an ever-moving balance between the welfare of the individual and that of society.

At the Rainbow Connection event, I was asked how we can bring together individual spiritual journeys within our IUCC community journey. One way is to share our individual stories. The event gave people an opportunity to share their experiences as members of the LGBTQ+ community and how they found IUCC.

Coming together to share our stories in a safe place, and engaging in meaningful and moving experiences like our worship service based on Jesus Christ Superstar, are ways to synchronize individual journeys with our shared journey as a congregation.