

March 11

State of the State Department and Diplomacy

Discussion Leader: Robert Smith, Ph.D.

Synopsis: During the Trump administration, the usual ways of conducting diplomacy have been upended. Many positions in the State Department have been left unfilled, and meetings with foreign leaders such as Kim Jong-un and Vladimir Putin have been undertaken with little advance planning. What effect are these changes having now, and how will they affect ongoing relationships between the United States and its allies and adversaries?

March 18

Cyber Conflicts and Geopolitics

Discussion Leader: Bryan Cunningham, Esq.

Synopsis: Cyber conflict is a new and continually developing threat, which can include foreign interference in elections, industrial sabotage, and attacks on infrastructure. Russia has been accused of interfering in the 2016 presidential elections in the United States and China is highly committed to using cyberspace as a tool of national policy. Dealing with cyber conflict will require new ways of looking at 21st century warfare. Is the United States prepared to respond to such threats?

Overview

The Great Decisions Program is America's oldest and largest grassroots discussion program on World Affairs. Started in 1954, it is the flagship program of the Foreign Policy Association, a non-partisan organization dedicated to providing discussion materials and a format to learn and discuss issues in international affairs and national security. It has been offered to the community by St. Mark Presbyterian Church for more than 25 years, and is open to anyone who desires to gain a deeper understanding of the current challenges the United States faces in the world today. Following each session, participants can send feedback electronically directly to U. S. State Department policy makers.

It is highly recommended that those who attend purchase a Participant Booklet and read the background information on each topic prior to attending the weekly sessions. Booklets will be on sale in the church courtyard the last three Sundays in January. Participant Booklets can also be ordered online at www.fpa.org or by calling (800) 477-5836. You can obtain more information about Great Decisions from the Foreign Policy Assoc. website www.fpa.org. We hope to see you at our sessions!



**The 2019
Great Decisions Program**

**Every Monday
January 28 – March 18
7:00 pm – 8:30 pm**

**Fellowship Hall
St. Mark Presbyterian Church
2200 San Joaquin Hills Road
Newport Beach, CA 92660**

January 28

Refugees and Global Migration

Discussion Leader:

The Rev. D. Mark Davis, Ph. D.

Synopsis: Today, no countries have open borders. Every state in today's global system has its own laws and policies about who is permitted to cross its borders, and how they will do so. Who determines whether someone is a refugee or a migrant? How have different countries, including the United States, reacted to migration? How effective are the international laws, policies and organizations that have evolved to assist and protect refugees and migrants?

February 4

The Middle East: Regional Disorder

Discussion Leaders:

Bobbi & Jerry Dauderman

Synopsis: As the presidency of Donald J. Trump passes the halfway point, the Middle East remains a region in turmoil. The Trump administration has aligned itself with strongmen in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, which along with Israel have a common goal of frustrating Iranian expansion. What will be the fallout from policy reversals such as withdrawing from the Iranian nuclear accord and moving the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem? Does the United States see a path forward in troubled states such as Syria, Yemen, Libya and Iraq? Is the United States headed toward war with Iran?

February 11

Nuclear Negotiation: Back to the Future?

Discussion Leader: Ronald J. Bee

Synopsis: Nuclear weapons have not gone away, and the Trump administration has brought a new urgency, if not a new approach, to dealing with them. The President has met with Vladimir Putin as the New Start Treaty with Russia comes up for renewal in 2021, the first presidential summit ever with Kim Jong-un occurred to discuss denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, and President Trump has decertified the Obama nuclear deal with Iran. To what degree should past nuclear talks guide future U.S. nuclear arms control negotiations? Can the art of the deal apply to stabilizing our nuclear future?

February 18

The Rise of Populism in Europe

Discussion Leader: Tony Hall

Synopsis: Mass migration, and the problems associated with it, have directly abetted the rise of populist parties in Europe. Opposition to immigration was the prime driver of support for Brexit; it brought a far-right party to the German Bundestag for the first time since the 1950s, and propelled Marine Le Pen to win a third of the vote in the French presidential election. In addition to calling for stronger borders, however, these parties are invariably illiberal, anti-American, anti-NATO and pro-Kremlin, making their rise a matter of serious concern for the national security interests of the United States.

February 25

Decoding U.S. - China Trade

Discussion Leader: John Graham, Ph.D.

Synopsis: Though arguably the most advanced economy in the world, the United States still uses centuries-old numbers to measure trade. These antique numbers mangle understanding of the U.S.-China trade relationship, shrinking America's true economic size and competitiveness, while swelling China's. Bad numbers give rise to bad policies that ultimately kill U.S. jobs and cede market share to China. What other tools can the United States employ to counter China's unfair trade practices? There are several available, yet they remain mostly unused.

March 4

The United States and Mexico: Partnership Tested

Discussion Leader: The Rev. Erin Dunigan

Synopsis: The United States and Mexico have a long, intertwined history, with both countries prominently featured in each other's politics and agendas. The war on drugs, immigration, and trade issues have taxed the relationship over the years. What impact will new leadership in both countries have on this crucial partnership?