

THE VISITOR

April 2019

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt



I got to the border sitting in a van driving through hard rain, which made the journey relatively quick, as well as dry and comfortable. While at the border, I ate three good meals a day, slept in a bed with clean sheets and four pillows, and took a hot shower every night to feel clean and relaxed.

It broke my heart open to see, be surrounded by, and talk to so many people who'd walked all, most, or some of the way from Central America to the US border, so many people getting their first good meal in days after getting nothing but the frozen bologna sandwich the detention facility fed them twice a day, so many people waiting outside in line for an hour on muddy pallets to get a cold shower in a Salvation Army shower unit and then putting on donated clean clothes, so many people sleeping on the dirty linoleum floor on thin blue mats in rooms with other families, so many people clutching bus tickets in big white envelopes with Jersey City, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Chattanooga, or just about anywhere else in the US written on them with magic marker.

At Catholic Charities in McAllen, Texas, a young father emerged from the crowd with his son and asked me if there was a doctor. I told him to follow me, I'd take him to la clinica.

As we walked, I looked down at his son, who looked to be about ten, limping along on beat-up feet in rubber flip-flops. I asked him in my rusty Spanish, "caminaste lejos para legar aqui?"

He turned his face to me, looked me in the eye, and nodded his head, si.

I saw pain in his face. "Tienes mucho dolor?" I asked.

He nodded, si.

When we arrived at la clinica, I wished the boy and his father well, then hurried back to what I was doing, which was handing out towels at the shower, sorting dirty and discarded clothing into bins, and chatting with the people waiting in line for a shower, mostly young mothers and fathers with young daughters and sons from Central America.

My encounter with the boy whose feet hurt, whose face showed pain, was one of many quick yet heart-rending encounters I had on the trip. Over and over again I experienced compassion—a poignant pain in my gut, a desire to help. But also anger. And I still feel anger.

I'm angry because there's good evidence that our country's official policy is to afflict refugee parents and children from Central America with further suffering. By restricting the number of Central Americans who can legally cross our border to seek asylum, and by enforcing zero-tolerance for unauthorized border crossing, our country is intentionally afflicting people who're fleeing affliction in order to deter them from asking us for help.

In Matamoros, Mexico, adults and children waiting to cross the border legally are living under the border bridge and surviving on the goodwill of people bringing them food, water, supplies, and information, as we did. People waiting there told us the US was allowing one family per week to cross legally.

One couple from Guatemala City, who said they left because of gangs, have already waited several months to cross legally so they can file an asylum claim, and are hopeful they can cross within a few weeks. In the meantime, they'll continue living in what amounts to a homeless encampment under the bridge in Mexico, eating and drinking what others bring them.

Treating poor Central Americans like this is nothing new for our country. The United States has afflicted poor people in Central America with political, economic, and military oppression for over a century. It's a sordid history of imperialism, support for dictators and oligarchies, and the violent suppression of popular movements for justice and human rights.

Because of this history, many Central American families today are poor, face political suppression and ecological degradation, and are subject to violent criminal networks and cartels that operate on all levels of society, from national governments down to the workplace, street, and home. A horrible life-or-death choice confronts many of them—risk everything by staying, or risk everything by leaving. Most who leave head for our country, for we are both the land that afflicts them and the land of hope and opportunity. At our border, they hit the wall of official US policy, which treats them as shamefully as it has so often treated Central Americans. But, thank God, other people from our country are doing all they can on both sides of the border to welcome, protect, and help the refugees, to offer them a different experience of who we are as a people.

There's a peace pole planted in the earth just several hundred feet from the border wall in Brownsville, Texas. May Peace Prevail On Earth, the pole says in English and Spanish. It takes peacemakers for peace to prevail, and we need more peacemakers at the border, all along the border, on the other side of the border, in Jersey City, San Francisco, Minneapolis, and Chattanooga, here in Austin, everywhere in this country the refugee parents and children are going, everywhere in this country someone can resist our country's official policy, prevail over its hard-heartedness, and work to change it. Without more peacemakers making peace in places where it's official policy to afflict, official policy will prevail, not peace.

Tom

May Visitor Deadline April 26, 2019

Church Leadership

Trustee Chair	Keith Beresheim
Deacons Chair	Barbara Burnham
Outreach Team	Whit Bodman
Moderator	John Goff
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Dennis Murphy
Christian Education Coordinators	Bethany Leach
Youth Sunday School	Amy Kent Rivera
Clerk	Jaime Hadley
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Webmaster	Mel Oakes
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

Heart of Texas Association News

April

by Liz Nash

We are trying something new at our spring Association Meeting -- offering the option for people to attend by Zoom, a video and audio conference website similar to Skype but with the capacity for several people to participate. The meeting will be at St. Paul UCC in Corpus Christi on **Saturday, May 4, at 11 am** (10:30 registration for those attending in person). We are preparing for the possibility of having an Ecclesiastical Council for an ordination candidate, meaning that it is very important for us to have a quorum (attendance from a majority of our churches) at the meeting in person or electronically. Of course, we encourage people to be there in person and also to plan to enjoy some time in the Corpus Christi area (on a great weekend to be on the beach). However, we also recognize that the distance will be a problem for some. Anticipating this situation, we intentionally set up our Association bylaws to allow electronic attendance. We will be working over the next few weeks to set up a meeting that will use Zoom, and are planning to send out a letter with instructions in early April. We also anticipate scheduling a couple of times when people can try a trial login to Zoom to connect with our meeting website to be sure it works for those who will be using it. We will need churches who will be having people attend by Zoom to let us know and to try the login in advance. Let's work together to help this happen! It will be a big and good step for our Association that can enable us to continue to have good participation with our long distances.

Our friends at United Christian in Austin have called an interim Senior Minister, Rev. Dr. **Laura Barnes**, who will be beginning her ministry on May 1. **Laura** served churches in Danville, California and in San Mateo, California before moving back to her hometown in Dallas, where she has served more recently in interim ministry. United has had a thorough and intentional search process for their interim,

with their excellent staff and gifted group of members who serve elsewhere in ministry leading the church during the search. Many of us, myself included, were delighted to meet Laura at the Clergy Retreat in February. We join United in welcoming her to the Heart of Texas Association.

Our South Central Conference Annual Meeting this year will be in New Orleans, always a treat to visit, on Friday May 31- Saturday June 1st. The SCC gathering will be at the Jung Hotel, near downtown and the French Quarter. The theme is "Resurrection Insurrection" with **Ron Buford** as the guest speaker. **Ron** currently serves as pastor of the Congregational Church of Sunnyvale, California and was the leader of the God is Still Speaking campaign in the UCC. He gave our ministers a real gift as our Clergy Retreat leader and speaker, with his gracious, articulate, and engaging presence. I hope many of you will go to New Orleans to hear him, to join in fellowship and worship, and to enjoy! Registration information, along with clergy boundary training information, can be found at <https://sccucc.org/2019-scc-annual-meeting-registration/>.

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash, Association Minister

Personals
by Pat Oakes

Pastor Tom had made a promise to **Beth Placek**—that when she returned to church after her extended illness, she would get a standing ovation. His promise finally was fulfilled on Sunday, March 24, when **Beth** and her husband **Chencho Flores** finally made it to church!! Folks who have known **Beth** for years and newcomers alike stood up and clapped and cheered! She was in a wheelchair, but her walking is improving daily. She is still at Brookdale Spicewood and is in the process of figuring out whether she will go home and get stronger or have her knee replacement surgery sooner rather than later.



3/24/19 Delighted Beth Placek arrived at church in style--helped by Mel Oakes, Sara Ross, her husband Chencho, and Robin Rosson



3/24/19 Joy Penticuff greeting long-absent Beth Placek during coffee hour with Liz Hawver, Chencho Flores, and Sara Ross

Jo Jensen writes, "Star gazing is a bit of a challenge in the city these days with its scarcity of dark starlit sky; however, when you arrive at the McDonald Observatory near Ft. Davis with Star Party tickets in hand like we (**Jo Jensen** and **Bob Garrett**) did recently, well, the clear night sky suddenly opens up as though a glitter bomb exploded overhead. We shivered in the sub-freezing cold wearing 5 layers of clothes, but it was worth every minute. We found it truly amazing to sit, stand, walk, and drink hot chocolate under the beauty of the night sky. Peering through 9 different telescopes at 8 different star clusters and 2 galaxies was VERY cool! If you haven't been, GO! This excursion was the longest we have taken in our new-to-us camper van. The trip included a tour of the historic Fort Davis, where we learned that **Henry O. Flipper**, the first African-American (and former slave) to graduate from the US Military Academy at West Point in 1877, served as the post quartermaster and commissary officer. After a brief stop in Marathon, Texas (population less than 500), where **Jo** enjoyed getting photographed next to a Cheetos truck (her favorite nutrition-free snack), and we paid an exorbitant amount to fill up the gas tank (\$3.49 per gallon), we headed down the road to Big Bend National Park. Rumor has it that bluebonnets in Big Bend are the best they've been in 30 years! What a gift to see the road lined with bluebonnets throughout the park. We decided that it takes us an hour to drive 10 miles because **Jo** is constantly stopping to photograph yet another gorgeous roadside landscape. The geography of the area is breathtakingly beautiful. I cannot believe I have lived in Texas most of my life (**Jo**) and never visited this magnificent part of the state. One of the first rangers we met, encouraged us to stop by the 'new Fossil Exhibit near mile marker 7.' As we neared the mile marker, we couldn't see anything but a sign telling us to turn, which we did, and we were not disappointed. It was highly educational and remarkably well done! We both skipped stones in the Rio Grande River and **Jo** climbed about halfway up the face of the Santa Elena Canyon. Our adventure concluded with a stop in Terlingua. Yes, it is the Chili Cookoff Capital of the World, but that event happens in November, not March.

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

What an interesting little ghost of a town in the largest county (Brewster) in Texas by land size – nearly 6200 square miles. It’s a great little people-watching town. Not so much the food though. Although, walking into the La Kiva restaurant, we noticed a Dodge Ram pickup truck with a personalized Wyoming license plate “Jensen.” We figured it was an omen that we chose a good place to eat...not. But the locals seemed to love its quiriness and the previous owner was murdered there 6 years ago by a drunk cowboy. So, the stories in the town are interesting. If you haven’t wandered, hiked, driven, or cycled through Big Bend country, by all means, do it now! It really was a great trip. We were gone about a week, but could’ve easily stayed another few days to explore and shoot more photos. We don’t have enough solar power yet to allow us to boondock (not connected to a power source), but we plan to add more so we can travel up the coasts and down to Key West.”



3/19 Meet Stella... Jo and Bob’s ride and constant companion in Big Bend

Whit Bodman had a very busy Sunday on March 10. He started the day by teaching the confirmation class at 9:30 a.m., then filled in for **Tom** during the 11 a.m. service, and then, after a brief respite after the service for a cup of coffee and some snacks, he started his Lenten discussion series “What I Believe and Why.” The study, reflection, and discussion series is focused on **Marcus Borg’s - The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith**. The discussion series will continue during Lent.



3/19 Bob Garrett



3/19 Jo Jensen checking out wild Cheetos in Big Bend!



3/10/19 Whit Bodman leading a Lenten study group after the service on Sunday

Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

Tom, Robin, and Alex headed west for a few days to do some hiking during spring break. They enjoyed a brisk hike through the clouds, and then above them, when they climbed Guadalupe Peak one day, and dry heat and high winds when they hiked in the Franklin Mountains the next day. Besides the great hikes, they enjoyed some awesome food at their favorite restaurant in El Paso. On the way home, they hit some scary freaky weather just east of Van Horn, including winds topping out at 100 mph and a hail storm of biblical proportions that completely cut off visibility and brought 1-10 to a halt. All in all, the trip provided all the fun and excitement one seeks on such a venture.



3/11/19 Tom, Robin and Alex VandeStadt atop Guadalupe Peak while on their spring break

Harrison Tucker left March 13th for Italy with his eighth grade class at St. Francis School. Every year a group of teachers chaperone the eighth graders to Italy for spring break. They traveled to Venice, Florence, Assisi, and Rome. They took gondola rides and toured a number of museums and cathedrals. The final two days they toured ruins in Rome. They even experienced Italian cooking classes and gladiator training! It was a very full 8 days of Italian experiences! Here is a quote from the arriving world traveler, “My Italy trip was a wonderful, life changing experience. I got to meet new people and eat new foods--like cow stomachs (aka tripe)! It was an awesome experience!”



3/19 Harrison Tucker working on his gladiator skills in Italy



3/19 Harrison Tucker, center in maroon shirt, learning how to make authentic pasta in Italy with his classmates from St. Francis School

Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes

On Sunday evening, March 3, the Waterloo Trio (**Jonathan Geer** on piano, **Tony Rogers** on cello, **James Blake**—visiting from NC—on violin) entertained a delighted crowd of about 40 folks at the church with a wonderful concert filled with a variety of music. Violinist **Amy Harris** joined in on several numbers. The concert was preceded by an informal pot-luck supper which was enjoyed by all.



3/3/19 The Waterloo Trio plus one--Amy Harris, James Blake, Tony Rogers, and Jonathan Geer

Former member and seminarian here and now pastor of Christ Congregational Church UCC in Fort Morgan, Colorado, **Beth Gleason** broke her right leg when she fell on black ice taking the garbage out to her dumpster in February. She thought she had sprained her ankle and treated it with a bag of frozen peas for 3 days until the pain forced her to the local ER for x-rays, where they told her she had broken her leg. She has a full but soft cast which she can remove for showers and now to drive. She was back driving just a week or so ago. She will see the orthopedist in Denver next week. Her doctor went to UT Medical School in Galveston so they reminisced about eating fresh seafood po' boys on the island. He is also one of the designated doctors for the Denver Nuggets professional basketball team, so she's in great hands. She hopes to downsize to a smaller cast soon and hopefully this will be behind her in another 3-4 weeks, just in time for Easter. **Beth** says HI to everyone and sends blessings to all of us from the Rocky Mountains.



2/1/19 Pastor Beth Gleason working hard in her church office in Fort Morgan CO, on a bad hair day while she was recuperating from her broken leg

Out of the blue, **Billy Brent Malkus** (vocalist and guitarist of the Texas Sapphires) responded to the Personals query for April. He says, “Hi, former parishioners. I haven’t attended for quite a few years but wanted to say hi to any of those who remember me. Sadly, I had to move out of state to AZ for health reasons. I was mysteriously ill for quite a while and in 2014 was diagnosed with chronic Lyme disease. This condition is so debilitating that it makes any kind of planning near futile. Some days I’ll wake up and think carpe diem but after an hour or two of running errands I have to return to my home (which is a travel trailer I purchased with my disability settlement) and go back to bed! Any prayers or healing vibes you could send my way would be appreciated. Y’all were a darn good bunch of folks to me....Blessings, **Billy Brent Malkus**”. **Brent** is still good friends with **Shannon** (picture on the right) who is the owner of VIVA day spas in Austin which **Brent** highly recommends! He hasn’t played a gig since SXSW 2016. He did have a Sapphires song in the Sundance Grand Jury winner flick (R rated “I Don’t Feel At Home in This World Anymore”) on Netflix from 2017 directed Austin film maker/director/actor **Macon Blair**. He recently finished an eight week course with **Noam Chomsky** at the University of Arizona. **Chomsky** is 90 years old and “retired” in Southern Arizona.

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Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

Brent says "The man exudes compassion and mirth. His sprawling intellect is a given. An honor to be there." **Brent**, consider many prayers and good wishes being sent your way.



3/17/06 Billy Brent Malkus and his parents--Bill and Terry on the left and his ex-fiancée Shannon Mouser on the right

The Women's Book Club met at **Sara Ross's** on Thursday, March 21st. They had a rather unusual format that evening because of the book they read. It was **A Bite-Sized History of France: Gastronomic Tales of Revolution, War, and Enlightenment** by **Stéphane Henaut** and **Jeni Mitchell**. The group was inspired to bring French foods mentioned in the book. **Sara** set an elegant table, delicious treats arrived, and the discussion of the book took place while the group feasted on French red wine, Provençal soup, a variety of French cheeses, quince jelly, croissants, a baguette and French butter, Madeleines, creme caramel, and gateau nantais. The gathering was saddened when they learned that **Nodie Murphy**, who had suggested the book and is an expert about things French, was unable to come as her mother became very ill that day and died that evening. The next day **Nodie** and **Dennis** flew to New Orleans to be with family.



3/21/19 Elegant book club with French food--Sarah Bentley, Carol Burlinson, Geneva Ross, Carolyn Thompson, Barbara Burnham, Lynne Lemley, Carol Barrett, and Sara Ross--extra places set for Nodie Murphy who could not come and Pat Oakes who took the picture

It has been awhile since we have seen much of the **Howicz** family. **Jen Howicz** sent the following update. "Emily spent spring break with her Texas State Regional Field Studies class on a trip to Big Bend National and State Parks. The group studied the processes that created the land and the ways people have lived off the land. **Tess** is pursuing her new love of journalism working on her high school paper and is in her sixth season of softball. **Jen** is on her last rotation for her physical therapy degree at LBJ hospital in Houston, and just submitted her capstone project for graduation. She will officially graduate after presenting the capstone at UTMB at the end of April, and then take her PT boards in July. Jim is earning sainthood by managing kids, dogs, household, and being sole provider until Jen graduates. We miss our church family muchly, and are looking forward to being back on a regular basis."

Photos cont. on next page

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

NEW FEATURE FOR APRIL VISITOR

Can you guess who this is? If you think you know, send your response to oakes@utexas.edu. If you would like to participate in the guessing game by sending an early photo of yourself, send it to the aforementioned e-mail address.



3/19 Breathtaking view in Big Bend—photo by Emily Howicz



3/19 Emily Howicz in Big Bend

History Corner

Mel and Pat Oakes are enjoying occasional visits to the Austin History Center where they are finding out more about the early history of the church. This month they did some more investigating of the early neighbors of the church when it moved to a new building at 408 W. 23rd, just a block from the UT campus. The sanctuary and fellowship hall at 408 West 23rd Street were dedicated in the fall of 1923. That means we are just 4 years away from celebrating our 100th year at this location. As near as we can figure, 412 W. 23rd was the parsonage. The 1921 and 1922 reverse directories list nothing at 412. **Rev. A.O. Stevens** served as pastor from 1921 until 1923 (He is still listed as pastor in the directory in 1924) and **Rev. Ruel P. Snider** was minister from 1925-28. We have residences, a shoe repair shop, rooming houses, a candy shop, and a fraternity house as neighbors.

<p>arrington H H (r) Red River Sabine 00) Edmonson R W (r) Oldham 00) Ritter H F gen ndse 01) Strom K V garage on W H (r) llin & Swenson grocers enckmann W A (o) 07) Ritter H F (o) ore A E (o) 8) Thomas H R (r) ls H W Swisher 0) Sharborough C (o) 07) Schlitter Valter (o) 08) Knippa Otto o) ermann H N (o) ssom Leo (o) Minter T I (o)</p>	<p>4th ward)—From 3300 University av w Speed- way e TWENTY-THIRD (West; 4th ward)—From 2300 Guadalupe w to Shoal Creek 403 Lee T S shoe repr 404 Miller Jennie Mrs (r) furn rms Aloha Tea Room 407 Charlie's Lunch Room 408 First Congregational Ch 409 Gersch J B Miss (r) 411 Vacant 412 Stevens A O Rev (r) San Antonio 505 Andrews J C (r) 507 Horne S W (o) 510 Jackson J A (o) Nueces 608 Burns M M (r) 609 Breck Marguerite (o) 611 Wukasch C G Bio Grande</p>	<p>500 Olander Texas lege ns 1 w Wing ns 2 w Ayer TWENTY-F 4th ward Wichita, Creek 102 Jones 104 Seider 200 Wooll 300 Little (o) 310 Unive (So Bibl 402 Stova furn 502 Wool 601 Alpha Fra</p>
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1924 reverse directory for Austin when Rev. A.O. Stevens was pastor

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J. A. JACKSON -- JEWEL

DIAMONDS
WATCHES

PHO

617 Congress Ave.

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(1927) POLK'S MORRISON & FOURMY

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1927 reverse directory for Austin when Rev. Reul P. Snider was pastor

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