

THE VISITOR

April 2020

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt



It's officially called shelter-in-place, though some may prefer calling it hunkered-down or being cooped-up. Whatever your terminology, some of us may find it challenging to be sheltered, hunkered, or cooped with the same person, or group of people, morning, noon, and night—all under the same roof, each with our own lives to live, each coping in our own way with how we're living now. Our nerves might get a bit frayed, our patience a bit thin, our tempers a bit short, our smile a bit forced. And for those living all alone, that poses its own challenges. Some of us can find ourselves to be difficult company from time to time, especially when we're hunkering by ourselves day after day without a break.

What I'm describing may not apply to you, but for those of you shaking your head and saying, "yes, he gets it," I offer you this prayer. It's

based on **Paul's** hymn to love. Give it a try. It can't hurt. Hopefully it'll help.

God who is love,
in these difficult and trying times
when it can be stressful at home, because I can't leave my home,
and everyone in my home must carry out their entire life under the same roof,
I pray, may your love for me help me love myself and others,
and make my home a loving home in this time when a loving home
can make all the difference in the world.

By your love, O God,
may I be patient and kind to all the people living under my roof,
including myself.

May I not be envious of others, boast about myself, be self-centered or arrogant.

May I not treat those with whom I live rudely, or insist on getting my way,
but consider the needs of others.

May I not be irritable, hold on to anger, become resentful,
or be happy about another's misfortune.

May I seek to do what's right in the eyes of Christ,
and be willing to hand over what I have for the benefit of another.

May love help me carry every burden, believe what seems unbelievable,
hope when all seems hopeless, and endure with grace this reality in which I live.

God, who is love, I invoke your presence in my heart and in my home,
and pray that your love will see me, and all those I love, through this ordeal.

In Christ's name, by Christ's love, I pray. Amen

Tom

May Visitor Deadline April 24, 2020

Church Leadership

Deacons Chair	Faye Dierksen
Outreach Team	Whit Bodman
Moderator	Joy Penticuff
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Dennis Murphy
Christian Education Coordinators	Jaime Hadley
Youth Sunday School	Amy Kent Rivera
Clerk	Reuel Nash
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Webmaster	Mel Oakes
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

Heart of Texas Association News April

by Liz Nash

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our Heart of Texas Association Spring Meeting has now been moved from April 4 to **Saturday, May, 16th**. We anticipate that the meeting will be a **Zoom video conference** instead of a face to face gathering. Because we will not have people driving long distances to meet, we will **start signing in at 10 am and begin at 10:30**. We will be finishing by lunchtime. Our thinking is that, by that time, many of us will be more familiar and comfortable with meeting electronically. It is possible that, by then, smaller groups may be able to gather at some churches to be together for the meeting, although of course that is something we cannot predict. As we get close to the meeting time, we will be sending out instructions for using Zoom. We are looking at some easy to use tutoring videos for those who are not experienced, and we will be offering an early chance to login to be sure everyone has a chance to learn how to use it. We anticipate having either one or two Ecclesiastical Councils, and we feel the sharing time among our churches will be more important than ever.

The United Church of Christ **National Youth Event** registrations for this coming summer have been **suspended indefinitely**. I have read on the Southern New England Conference website that the event is being postponed until 2022, but I have not received verification of that yet. We certainly will send out more news as we have it. Many of our youth were planning to go, and we want to support you in attending this outstanding event when it can happen safely.

At this time, **Darrin Holub** is scheduled to be installed as the Pastor of St John's UCC in Burton on Sunday morning, April 19th. That installation is on hold at this time. We will be announcing whether this will happen on schedule or whether it will be postponed. We look forward to joining with St. John's and **Darrin** to celebrate his ministry with them with joy when they are able to hold this service.

Gary Olsen, the Lead Pastor of Rolling Hills Community Church in Lago Vista, retired in February after many years of excellent ministry. The new Lead Pastor, **Matt Ritter**, has served the church since 2017 as the Associate and Family Pastor. Our prayers are with **Gary** as he begins this new phase in his life, and with **Matt**, and Rolling Hills as they start a new time of ministry.

Mary Wilson, Pastor of Church of the Savior in Cedar Park, was scheduled to retire this month after seventeen and a half years in ministry there, with Palm Sunday as her farewell service. **Crystal Silva McCormick** has been called to ministry as their new minister. In light of the COVID-19 restrictions on gathering for worship, **Mary** has offered to extend her ministry for a few weeks. Our prayers are with **Mary, Crystal**, and Church of the Savior as they navigate this time of change together. We stand with them in celebrating **Mary's** vibrant ministry there and in joyously welcoming **Crystal** as their new pastor.

Bethany Congregational in San Antonio is welcoming **Jacqueline Moncrief** as their new minister. Pastor **Jacque** will have an unusual start there as April begins; helping the church put together a service via internet to begin her ministry. Welcome, Pastor **Jacque!**

I am grateful for the hard work, caring, and substantial work our pastors and churches are doing to put together online worship services and to reach out to members and friends. We are in a challenging time, and our ministry with one another is perhaps more important now than ever.

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash, Association Minister

Personals by Pat Oakes

This month has been very disorienting for everyone. Little did we think that when we left the church on Sunday, March 8th, that we would not be coming back for some time. By Sunday the 15th, it was clear that the right thing to do was to cancel the service. There was to have been a christening that day of **Oliver Lytle**, but parents **Heather** and **Zac** decided it was not a good time to travel from Yakima, WA, to Texas. By the 22nd there was a well-planned joint on-line service with our church and University Baptist at UBC. Both **Tom** and **Amelia Fulbright** were to lead the service, but at the last minute Amelia had to cancel as she was not feeling at all well. She went to be checked and it was determined that she was feeling the effects of an overabundance of oak pollen—mercifully, not coronavirus! **Tom** filled in seamlessly with the liturgy and the sermon, the leader from UBC suggested that we all could light a candle in our homes to share the light of Christ, and prayers and music were shared. Our trio recorded some music



3/22/20 Pastor Tom VandeStadt leading the service at UBC

which they had planned to play at church and put it on our church Facebook page. This was happening at **Jonathan** and **Roberto's** home and **Xitlali** made a surprise cameo visit. After the service there was a Zoom (a video computer app) coffee hour where many of the 25 or so of our church members who took part in the church service also showed up for coffee hour. Many thanks to Reuel Nash who coordinated the Zoom efforts. The tech-challenged in our

community will have a steep learning curve in coming weeks. Among the 25 or so logging in to the service were **Fran** and **Rambie Briggs**, **Jaime Hadley**, **Kaye Pruett**, **Joy Penticuff**, **Mel** and **Pat Oakes**, **Carolyn Thompson**, **Pam Tucker**, **Faye** and **Andy Dierksen**, **Dave** and **Sara Ross**, **Nodie** and **Dennis Murphy**, **Liz Nash**, **Annie Nash** (from Vermont) and “traveling” the longest way—**Jaana Rehbein** who had planned on being in Austin with her daughter **Ella** in mid-March from her home in Hannover, Germany, but that trip had to be canceled. Many thanks to **Tom** who has been sending out wonderful words of encouragement to all of us as this strange, unsettling process unfolds.



3/22/20 The trio recording music in Jonathan's home studio

Pam, **Savanna**, **Harrison**, and **Alison Goodgame-Tucker** are great examples of how to manage the coronavirus crisis. **Pam** says, “**Savanna** and **Harrison** are off on spring break now and we have implemented greatly restricted contact with other people during this time and strict procedures at home for hand washing and sanitizing. Since school is off for two extra weeks, we are planning what we can do that would be educational in case there are no remote classes offered. The biggest concern was **Sav's** job. She is working at Kerbey Lane, but thankfully, with dine-in shut down, she will not have to go in for some time. When we arrive home, we immediately go to the bathroom and wash hands, then back out to wipe down the door handle and garage door opener and light switch and car with bleach wipes. All

Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes

groceries are wiped down and fruit is washed with soap. I am still working as is everyone at Utility Composites. For a manufacturing facility, working at home is not an option. We are all very conscious of distancing and hand washing and disinfecting. It is different--much quieter, people are staying far apart. So far, no one is sick. While phones have been quiet, our sales are still ok, but the future is uncertain. We sell our products mostly to other manufacturing facilities in the U.S. and OUS and they are still operating for now. Our partner company is in northern Italy and they are operating with only a few people right now. They are very concerned, and their emails emphasize that we must take this very seriously. **Alison** is keeping busy with remodeling projects at her house. She owns a house that has been a rent house, then her mom moved in, but her mom moved to a retirement facility a few months ago. **Alison** used to see her mom on a daily basis, but the facility is on lockdown with no visitors allowed. For evening entertainment, we have been playing cards and board games and watched a movie together. We will plan on more of that going forward."

Lucy Erda reports, "At this time last year, I was battling high blood pressure, pre-diabetes, cancer, and a post-surgical wound infection. This time has filled me with multiple grateful thoughts. I am grateful this virus wasn't around then. It would have made recovery so much more difficult. I am grateful that I was able to go out and sing. I had visitors to help me. The dietary and lifestyle changes have led me to greatly improved health. Being in quarantine is easier because this time, I'm doing it to protect others who are more vulnerable to the virus."

CJ Wood is a newcomer to the church and is the neonatal ICU chaplain at Seton Main on 38th St. She has only been there a few months and is experiencing baptism by fire in this challenging time. She says, "I have the unique privilege of working alongside those who are on the front lines in the hospital. As a hospital chaplain, one might think that patients and their loved ones are the focus of our pastoral care. Though we are available 24/7 to our patients and their loved ones, I actually spend a significant amount of time supporting staff. The better care

and support our staff receives, then the staff can give better care and support to patients and their loved ones. I work with brave people with huge hearts. It has been a joy to watch how our hospital community is finding ways to help those hurting outside the hospital. Many units are intentionally and collectively ordering lunch from local restaurants to help them through this difficult time. With our schedules, it can be difficult to get to the grocery store and when we do it is at the end of the day when there isn't much left. Co-workers are shopping for each other and sharing from their own supplies. In the midst of caring for patients and their families, my hospital family is caring for each other and finding ways to help those outside the hospital. It is an honor and privilege to be a hospital chaplain."

Choir director **Nodie Murphy** reflects, "I thought I'd be relaxing and reading during my self-sequestering, but instead I'm running around trying to get medical necessities and food supplies in order. I'm so glad that we got to see all of our children before this health scare paralyzed the country. Our daughter-in-law is a nurse and I hold all the health care professionals close to my heart right now. This has been such a life lesson; so many events have been cancelled, postponed, forgotten. My sister **Julianne** does monthly worship services at Lambeth House in New Orleans, where there is a serious outbreak of the virus. I pray for her safety. Another sister has lung problems, making her particularly vulnerable. Yet she has been cautious for years, wearing gloves, masks, so she may be better prepared than most of us. I picked Love as a theme for the anthems during Lent; the choir has rehearsed them and already sung one of them. When choir resumes, we can sing about Love and how it has sustained us through this trial."

Bill Campbell and **Victoria Li** have this to say, "We have experienced a number of particular impacts from the coronavirus situation. We have had a number of travel plans cancelled including an April 11th Princess cruise from Barcelona to Italy and Greece (that was certainly an ill-fated vacation plan) and trips to Midland and Lubbock respectively for **Victoria's** daughter **Lillian's** match day ceremony for surgery residency and her medical school graduation. We are happy to share that **Lillian** will be going

Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes

to the University Medical Center in Charleston, SC, for a five year surgery residency that starts in July. I (**Bill**) have been busy over the last couple weeks converting my counseling work to the use of video technology and helping New Life Institute (non-profit counseling center) with that conversion. **Victoria** has been very busy working with local and national Asian- American organizations on coronavirus responses. We are fortunate and grateful that no one in our family has contracted the virus but we especially worry about our several children who are doctors and nurses. "

Barbara Burnham put on her writer's hat and says, "As luck would have it, it was Friday the 13th. I had slept late and felt refreshed during my recovery from the flu. The sun was peering around the curtains, and I was certain it would be a good day. I reached for my cell phone, and in that act I entered another world. I had received a text from my son saying that schools were closed, and there were hour-long lines at the grocery stores. I look at that moment now as before and after. Of course, people on the coasts had experienced 'before and after' a few weeks earlier. I thought back to my family's trip to Las Vegas in early February (a gift to celebrate my birthday and retirement). We were beginning to hear some rumblings about the virus and had a bit of anxiety about air travel, but I don't think any of us could have imagined then what was about to occur. I was just beginning to adjust to retirement but certainly had no shortage of tasks to do, from dealing with boxes from storage to my ever-present fleece just waiting to be made into blankets. Many books to read and movies to watch. Certainly no boredom. But it is the social interaction I miss, especially with my granddaughters. I went to their home the following Monday, which was my younger granddaughter's birthday (her party was cancelled), and that was the last time I have been able to hug or play with them. Still, I consider myself and my family very fortunate. My son already works from home, and my daughter in law has been allowed to do her work at home electronically. We have sufficient income to get through, unlike tens or hundreds or thousands who have been laid off. Our main anxiety, other than contagion, is around groceries. I tried one delivery service from a local store, but it was a monumental

failure. One store is offering senior delivery, but their selections are limited and not really what I need (unless I get desperate). Another store is opening at seven for seniors and pregnant women to shop, hopefully minus the crowds. However, that is another opportunity for exposure. I had stocked up on canned goods, but not so much on fresh ones. The day before the 13th, I had the thought that I should shop for fresh food, but I didn't feel well, so I put it off, and so..... I am thrilled that my friends in my two book clubs are going to try to meet through Zoom. I text or talk on the phone to my family every day. My friend in Smithville is sending me photos from the recent modern quilt show in Austin (from "before"). I pray for our chaplain friends who are ministering to people who desperately need their words and support, and for my fellow psychologists, the ones who are still allowed in nursing homes. I believe that things will never be the same, but I am confident in our resilience and in our love and support for one another. I often think of the British motto from the war, "Keep calm and carry on." Or, as the **Jane Austen Society** says, "Keep calm and read **Jane Austen.**"

Carolyn Thompson writes. "I am finding it difficult to establish a routine for my days and weeks without the church service, meetings, and usual errands that get me out of the house. I particularly miss my exercise class. I need an exercise buddy or several. We do not all need to do the same exercises or even see each other. Maybe just someone to hold me accountable at a certain time each day. I have an excellent DVD with easy yoga routines; I just need to use it 2-3 times a week."

Meredith Williams Parker (daughter of the late **Mary Charles Williams**, a long-time member of the church) and her husband **Graham** write from their winter home in Marbella, Spain, "We are doing fine albeit on day 11 of practically total lock down. I have left the house twice under strict rules to shop for food which is in plentiful supply including toilet paper! My friend in Washington, D.C. told me yesterday that there is not any there. Crazy. Our flight on the 3rd of April (back to their home in Salcombe on the south coast of England) has been cancelled and I have changed it to the 1st of May. All our friends in Salcombe suggest we stay here, better weather and

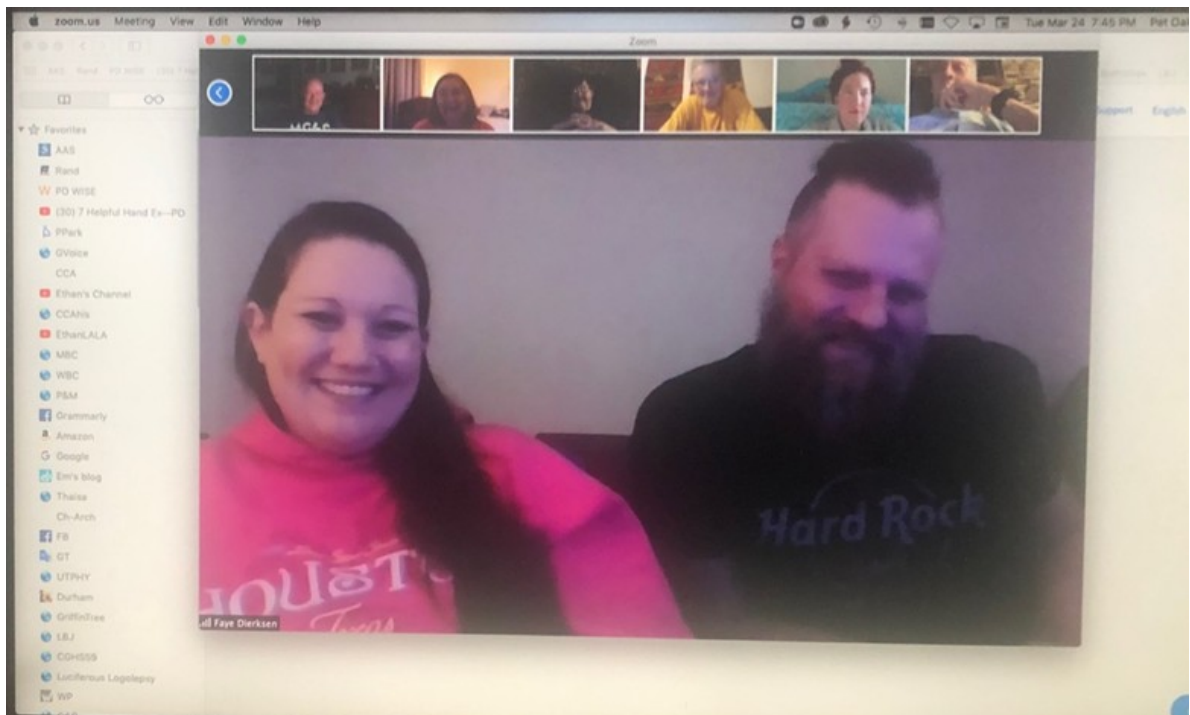
Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

lots of food. Salcombe harbor is closed to pleasure-craft so there is no point in rushing home to launch our sailboat plus the boatyard is now closed. All in all we are better off. The rate of infection in Spain is horrible but focused on Madrid. Fortunately we have not had many cases here and the Spanish are behaving very well unlike like our fellow Brits, panic buying and not adhering to the rules about social distancing."

In February, **Marilyn Gaddis** and **George Carruthers** were visited by **Marilyn's** nephew, wife, and BIG dog as they were touring the US. They are awaiting the completion of their retirement home in North Carolina. They parked their big rig at a nearby RV park. **Jean**, a gourmet cook, took over **Marilyn's** kitchen for ten days and **Dick** did the dishes! **Jean** left "surprise goodies" in the freezer for later consumption. In March, **George's** nephew, wife, and dog from Idaho came by in their RV. They divided their time between a job at George West and their son and family in San Antonio. **Marilyn** and **George** hope to visit them later in the summer. Due to the present crisis, **Marilyn's** 70th College Reunion Weekend in early May at Pomona College was cancelled. She and daughter-in-law, **Sandra Carruthers**,

had planned an extended visit to Southern California to see **Marilyn's** family and friends and to visit the various places **Marilyn** had lived. Oh well! Fortunately, **George** has recovered from his recent severe bout of bronchitis. He has been out doing yard work but lacks energy. Oh well, the doctor says to remember that he is 96!

The Tuesday night Slab BBQ group had a different format on Tuesday, March 24th. Everyone provided their own food and beverages and met at seven from their own homes on the Zoom platform on their computers. Among those present were **Whit** and **Betty Bodman**, **Dave** and **Sara Ross**, **John Goff** (with two cats), **Tom VandeStadt** and **Robin Chapman** and their dog, **Barbara Burnham** (who is keeping busy making fleece blankets for children), **Faye** and **Andy Dierksen** (with their dogs), **Joy Penticuff** (who told a great joke!), **Pat** and **Mel Oakes**, **Tony Rogers**, and **Abby Lundgren** (from Flagstaff where she is in school and will be taking her graduate classes on line for the rest of the semester). **Faye** and **Andy** were looking forward to Faye's doctor appointment the next day where they would get to hear their baby's heartbeat. The baby is due in the fall.



3/24/20 Slab Barbecue Zoom gathering--Faye and Andy Dierksen with John Goff, Barbara Burnham, Sara Ross, Tom VandeStadt, Abby Lundgren, Dave Ross across the top

Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes

Don Miles says. "Some of us who have been attending Tuesday happy hours at Slab BBQ have been talking about a "Cinco de Mayo" party. May 5th is on a Tuesday this year, and we thought we might have the party at Casa Chapala, right near the Slab BBQ at Burnet Rd. and US 183. We're not asking for commitments, but we'd like to get a ballpark figure of who might show up. If you're interested, please mention it to me or to **Faye** or **Andy Dierksen** when you see any one of us at church. My special guest will be General **Ignacio Zaragoza**, who won the Battle of Puebla on Cinco de Mayo." Don sent this in before everything shut down—perhaps there can be an on-line Zoom celebration with **Don's** special guest.



Don Miles' special guest will be General Ignacio Zaragoza, who won the Battle of Puebla on Cinco de Mayo—even if the gathering is held later.

Whit Bodman had planned to be hiking about 140 miles of the Camino de Santiago in southern France in June, but the virus has effectively canceled that possibility for him. He will get to go sailing in Maine in early August with his brother and in-laws. Whit is convinced that the virus cannot transport itself over the cold Maine waters. He and **Betty** have been working with architects to prepare apartments in Jersey City for their daughter **Elizabeth** and her family, and eventually, them. They have never lived in an urban area, so that will be a big change, one of several big changes. Whit tells us not to worry. Moving up there is not imminent. Austin is still the best. Living upstairs from their grandchildren will be

a particular blessing. They hope they will continue to think so as well. Rumor has it that **Whit** has retired. It is true that he is no longer teaching at the seminary, or going to committee meetings, or being paid, but he will do a course occasionally, and is still at the office, writing, editing, and preparing classes at churches. He feels that he has been repurposed. Their biggest news is that their son, **Noah**, and wife **Erin**, are about to become the parents of twin boys, due sometime in August. **Whit** and **Betty** never thought it would happen. **Noah** and **Erin** are in Montana – not the most accessible location – but they will manage to visit—regularly—as often as needed, and then some. They just had to release their beloved old dog, **Bomber**, into the world to come. The house is emptier now, but not for long. **Whit** and **Betty** have been told that the twins are not identical, and will NOT be dressed identically. **Betty** is knitting non-identical little hats and will start on some non-identical sweaters soon.

Dennis Schneider writes from Tokyo, Japan, "We're making a few changes at church. In order to avoid touching, we pass the peace by bowing or bumping elbows. We've served communion by intinction for some time. Now the server hands the wafer to the recipient rather than have a multitude of hands scrabbling around in the bowl. A few things like that, but mostly keeping up with the major part of the program. The monthly luncheon for our homeless neighbors is cancelled this month but early morning delivery of rice balls to local gathering spots are continuing. Being retired, I could/should stay home, but I still go to sing in the choir. That's the highlight of my week. I suppose the most dangerous part for me is riding the commuter trains to church and back. Anyway, best wishes to you all for health and safety." We send our good wishes right back to you, **Dennis**.

Stephen Russell (who went to Tucson for spring break) and **Scott Neely** are staying put in Tucson, AZ, where they have a home. Their son **Ryan** is doing well - he works in medical clinics, so he has been very busy. **Ryan** says they have been taking strict precautions ... so ... hopefully he'll be okay and safe. **Stephen** and **Scott** note that it is a bummer not to get to see him in person given that they are there - but they have spoken a lot.

Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

Long-time members of the church remember Dr. **James Perkins** (he was on the faculty of Huston-Tillotson College), his wife **Evangeline** and their daughter **Priscilla**. **Priscilla** has visited us a number of times over the years. After a distinguished career in academia (geology, environmental science and engineering), she is now retired and the Director Emerita of the University of Nebraska State Museum. The University of Nebraska featured her career for International Women's Day. Here is the link to the interesting article about a wonderful career with information on her, her parents, and her husband, **Ed Grew**. (Full disclosure—**Pat Oakes** and **Priscilla** are distant cousins as both are descendants of **John Alden** and **Priscilla Mullins**. **Pat** and **Mel Oakes** learned that fact when their daughter **Beth** was baptized in 1967—her middle name being **Alden**. After the service Dr. **Perkins** asked about **Beth's** middle name, **Pat** told him of the link through her great-uncle **Alden White** all the way back to **John Alden**. Dr. **Perkins** reached out his hand to shake **Pat's** and said, "Hello, cousin!").

<https://news.unl.edu/newsrooms/today/article/grew-looks-back-on-impactful-intercontinental-career/>

Mel and **Pat Oakes** are staying busy with various projects around the house. **Mel** is on-line tutoring the Aggie granddaughter of good friends of theirs—linear algebra, no less. **Pat** is enjoying working on labeling and editing her huge trove of photos. Daughter **Beth** and her husband **Eugene** had to make an emergency run—flying to Hartford, CT, renting a car and driving to Northampton, MA, to pick up their very disappointed daughter **Emily**, 1/2 way through her second semester of her freshman year at Smith which she is loving. **Bob** and **Debbie Appel Knowlton** drove from their home in New York state to pick up their daughter **Emily** (also very disappointed) at U. Mass Amherst—both girls were just a few miles apart but have not yet met up. Maybe next year.

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes



Easter eggs dyed using natural dyes—from onion skins (the gold, yellow, and brown eggs) and bluebonnets (the blue, gray, and white eggs)

Hildegard Kuehne Everett, a dear friend and a life-long member of the church (her parents were very early members of the church) taught me how to make these Easter eggs more than 40 years ago, just as the old German settlers did in Fredericksburg--using bluebonnets and the papery part of onion skins. **Hildegard's** mother and father (b. 1872—a very early member of the UT physics department) were the children of German immigrants. She learned from friends and family how to make these beautiful eggs. The bluebonnets were early this year and may be gone before Easter, so making them may not be possible but one can always dye the onion skin eggs.

This may be a project to work on while we are all sheltering at home. Children might also enjoy the process. Some of you may have **bluebonnets** nearby which you can pick. If you can get **bluebonnets**, you will need 4-5 per egg. Start right now saving onion skins—here's hoping that stores have onions in supply (the yellow ones work best—purple will also

work). You will need white unboiled eggs, strips of cloth about 2 inches wide and 8-10 inches long, straight pins, a pot and lid for each group of eggs, and water. You used the same technique with each type of coloring agent. Take the egg in your hands and place the flowers or onion skins as close together as you can manage around the egg. Then take the cloth strips and carefully wrap the egg as closely as you can—don't break the egg—until you have wrapped the whole egg. Carefully take a straight pin and secure the strip so that it will stay wound around the egg. Continue with the rest of the eggs. Place them in the pan, cover with water and a lid, bring to a boil, let boil for one minute, and then let sit off the heat for 30 minutes or so—more won't hurt. Gently drain the eggs, cover with cold water (maybe put in some ice cubes) and let them sit until cool. Drain and remove the pins, strips, and the skins/flowers. Store in the refrigerator until ready to delight you family/friends with your Easter creations. Enjoy! Happy Easter!!