

This deed at Cana-in Galilee is the first of the signs by which Jesus revealed (*ephanerosen*) his glory and led his disciples to believe in him. --John 2: 11

Ephanerosen. Epiphany. Manifestation. Disclosure.

The visit of the Magi. The offering of gifts. Gold, the gift for a King. Frankincense used by priests to open to way to God. Myrrh, spread upon bodies in preparation for burial.

The baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan, symbol of Israel's passage to freedom. The heavens open up, a dove descends, and a voice proclaims, "this is my son, with whom I am well pleased."

The turning of water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana. A "sign" by which Jesus' disciples are led to believe in him.

The transfiguration of Jesus on a mountain top. Garments dazzling white. Moses and Elijah. A voice from the cloud, "this is my son, my chosen one, listen to him."

Epiphany. A holy day. A liturgical season.

Older than the festival of Christmas, the origins of the holy day and liturgical season of Epiphany are somewhat obscure. Some early Near Eastern Christian churches chose a pagan Egyptian winter solstice festival, annually held on January 6, to celebrate their own Christian holy day. They called it Theophany, or the Epiphany, and they celebrated their bold testimony of faith that a man named Jesus of Nazareth was the flesh and blood manifestation of their God. They proclaimed Jesus to be the Christ. The Son of God. The Beloved One of God. The Chosen One of God. The One who disclosed and revealed God to them. The One they were to listen to, follow, trust, and love if they were to know God.

By the early fourth century A.D., Christians were celebrating Epiphany in places like Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Epiphany was their time to commemorate the birth of Jesus, his baptism, and the first sign he performed at the wedding feast in Cana. Epiphany joined Easter and Pentecost in becoming one of the three most holy days in the Christian year.

In the middle of the fourth century, the church in Rome established a new Christian holy day when it chose the Roman winter solstice festival of the Unconquered Sun, a pagan festival held annually on December 25, as the day to celebrate the light of God who entered the world in Jesus' birth. Due in part to the prestige and influence of the Roman church, this new celebration spread quickly throughout the Christian church. The new celebration was called the Christ mass. Christmas.

As a result, Christmas and Epiphany became two distinct Christian celebrations. Christmas celebrated the birth of Jesus. Epiphany celebrated such events as the Magi's visit, and Jesus' baptism and transfiguration. The major theme of Epiphany has always remained the same, the self-disclosure of God's transforming power in the person of Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, Christmas has greatly eclipsed the recognition and celebration of Epiphany in our contemporary culture. The reason for this is more cultural than liturgical, and we need only witness the events between the end of October and the last 24-hour sale on December 24 to recognize the reason. It's too bad, because the spiritual message of Epiphany, that Christ manifests the transforming power of God to the world, is a profound message. It is a message the church, the Body of Christ in history, must keep

before it always. We are called, as the Body of Christ, and by the grace of God, to disclose and manifest the transforming of power of God to the world in which we live. We are called to be an epiphany of God. May we respond faithfully to the call.

Tom

OUTREACH ALERT

Front Porch Lunch Donations Needed

The Front Porch Lunch, serving homeless youth, is now operating twice a month. Instead of requesting specific food items from the congregation, which was logistically daunting, we are now requesting cash donations. \$50 will support one full lunch for about 20 guests. Please consider sponsoring one or more lunches this year. To do so, just write a check to the church and designate it for the Front Porch Lunch.

FROM THE BOARD OF DEACONS

On Sunday, January 29th, we will be welcoming Alex Vandestadt and Becky Nash, this year's confirmands, into full membership in our church. Members of the Board of Deacons will meet with Alex and Becky before worship, then the congregation will be invited to vote to affirm them as members before they are confirmed. The date will have passed by the time you read this, but we wanted to share that the Deacons thought Annual Meeting Sunday would be a great time to have Alex and Becky join since they will have a bit more of an initiation into our congregational polity that day by being able to vote on the budget and the other issues brought before Annual Meeting. Alex and Becky have been full members of our church as youth before this time, and it is a joy to have them affirm their baptism and their faith among us.

We will be running our second monthly ad in the *Austin Chronicle* on the last weekend of January. This is part of our increased effort to get the word out about our church's ministry. We currently have a monthly ad that we share with area UCC churches in the *Statesman*, we have the banner we have recently added to the outside of the church (our second one), we are continuing with our mailings to new area residents until we have gone through all our printed postcards, and we will be running the monthly *Chronicle* ad on the fourth week of the month (except for a switch we will make one month to the "Best of Austin" issue).

This month, too, we say farewell to Liz Spencer with mixed feelings: joy with her for her call to the UCC church in Lexington, MO and sadness for us because we will miss her!

Chairs of our Boards

Trustees:	Pam Tucker
Deacons:	Liz Nash
Christian Education:	Jennifer Howicz

Christian Outreach:

John Goff

TRUSTEES CORNER

Trustees reviewed the pledges from 2005 and concluded that about 98% of pledged income was received. There are still some funds left over from the windows fund drive that can be used toward something like the Appel Room window repair. Expenditures for 2005 were within the approved budget by several thousand dollars, but we also spent several thousand more than we actually received in 2005. The 2006 budget will be presented for approval with only minor adjustments. A small delegation will be negotiating with George Mitchell for some parking privileges in the garage scheduled for completion in August 2006. Parking meters will soon be installed on San Antonio street. The exterior lights of the church are now working at night. The lock on the nursery will be changed to allow it to be unlocked so we don't have to use the sliding bolt to keep it open. Finally, trustees are in the process of updating the job descriptions for trustees, financial secretary, and treasurer.

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 4 Jonathan M. Carruthers
- 6 Mardie Oakes
Holly Ann Horner
- 7 Geneva Ross
- 8 Barbara Burnham
Lois Drachenberg
- 11 Valentino Herrera
- 13 Richard Jackson
- 16 Mathis Blackstock
Nancy C. Brown
Betty James
- 17 John Horner
John Moore
- 18 Ned Murphy
- 19 Jamie Adams
- 20 Flo Chiles
Whit Bodman
- 26 Ida M. Little
- 29 Martha Wilding

FREEZE NIGHT MINISTERS FOR FEBRUARY

- 1 Wed Tom/Robin, Dennis Murphy, Chester Rosson
- 4 Sat Tom/Robin, Will Heimbach, Jennifer Howicz

6 Mon John Goff, Ben White, Sara Ross
 8 Wed Tom/Robin, Doyal Pinkard, Liz Spencer
 11 Sat Tom/Robin, Will Heimbach, Cecile Adam
 12 Sun Tom/Robin, Ben White, Cecile Adam
 13 Mon John Goff, Matt Blackstock, Sara Ross
 15 Wed Tom/Robin, Dennis Murphy, Chester Rosson
 18 Sat Tom/Robin, Will Heimbach, Liz Nash
 20 Mon John Goff, Ben White, Sara Ross
 22 Wed Tom/Robin, Doyal Pinkard, Will Heimbach
 25 Sat Tom/Robin, Will Heimbach, Jennifer Howicz
 26 Sun Tom/Robin, Reuel & Ellie Nash
 27 Mon John Goff, Matt Blackstock, Sara Ross

PERSONALS **by Pat Oakes**

Our church community has suffered several losses in the past month.

George Wright died just after Christmas after a long struggle with cancer. He hailed from New England, and still had many family ties and connections to the land of Congregational Pilgrims. As George said more than once, Massachusetts is the only place one can really celebrate Thanksgiving. George was an ordained UCC clergy person and certified pastoral counselor. He served UCC churches around the U.S. and particularly enjoyed his tenure in Montana. He served as a chaplain at Austin Hospice and continued providing counselling services long into his retirement. George was a fanatic on the tennis court, a shark at the card table, and a man who enjoyed having a good time with friends. We miss him, and send our love to his family and dear friend, Barbara Sterling.

Weldon "Dutch" Scheel, long-time member of the Congregational Church of Austin, died on January 1, 2006, at the age of 94. He brought music into the lives of so many people and it is quite fitting that his funeral service celebrated that musical legacy. A group that he directed for a number of years, The Silver Strings, played for the service, before, during, and after--with selections like "Let a Smile Be Your Umbrella." Weldon's wonderful, broad smile will be missed by everyone. He was involved with music virtually all of his life, played the piano and the bass, and worked with a number of bands (including his own Dutch Scheel All University Band while he was at the University of Texas). He and Marie were married in 1940 after a three year courtship. They met at the Sherwood Music School where Marie was a voice major. During WWII, Weldon served for 3 1/2 years in the Army, including 10 months in India. After the war, he and Marie moved back to Austin where he and Marie taught music in AISD for many years (Weldon for 29 years as a band director). In his retirement he stayed a part of the music world in Austin, including The Silver Strings and The Wednesday Morning Music Club. Marie wants everyone to know how much she appreciates all of the calls, visits, cards, and remembrances that she has received. It is very lonesome for her without Weldon, so keep the cards, visits, and calls coming.

John Burlinson's eighty-four-year-old mother, **Erdine Tryon Burlinson** died in Provo, Utah, where she had been staying for the past few years near John's sister Jo -- after living nearly all her life in her beloved Southern Arizona desert. Mercifully, her final illness was relatively brief and her death was peaceful. Carol, Jake and John flew to Provo to say goodbye, but sadly were a little too late; she had passed away the night before they arrived. Jake was able, however, to visit again with some of his cousins, whom he hadn't seen for nearly 16 years -- and they were blessed with the opportunity to meet their new niece Sarah, only 5 weeks old -- his mom's second great-grandchild. The sadness of the visit was really brought home when they returned to St. David, Arizona, for the burial. The visit brought up a lot of memories and emotions for Carol and John, since they were both brought up around there. Carol lost both of her parents at an early age, so John's mom was like a second mother to her. Although she had not been in the best of health the past few years, they were not expecting anything so sudden, so they're still working through some pretty strong feelings. Our condolences to all of you.

On December 14th, **Rizer Everett** and Johanna Householder attended the ExxonMobil Retiree Club luncheon at the Barton Creek Country Club where a good program of seasonal music was provided by the Chamber Choir of Lake Travis High School. In the days before Christmas, he enjoyed reading all the Christmas cards and letters from friends in the various states and the country of Indonesia where he and Hildegard lived. Rizer learned how to play chess in Austin at age 10 from his father. His dad had the pleasure of being one of the chess players who participated in games against Jose Cappablanca, world champion 1921-27 (all of which were won by the visitor). Continuing that chess legacy, Rizer is teaching another young fellow, Henry Householder, and they played three games of chess one afternoon in mid-December. Henry is interested in learning to improve his ability to play chess. On December 22, Johanna and Rizer had lunch at the 34th Street Café which they highly recommend as a place where their good specials are served at noon. He enjoyed reading "The Bridge on the Drina" by Ivo Andric, a novel that tells about the suffering of the people of Bosnia from the late sixteenth century to the beginning of WWI. On December 25th, he was a dinner guest of the Householder family. A recent report from his family doctor suggests that he is developing a chronic hematologic condition CLL (chronic lymphocytic leukemia), and he has appointments with other doctors who will make their recommendations for the ailment that is a slow moving treatable condition. His MRI and CAT scans were done in mid-January, and he is hoping (as are we all) that the results of those treatments will be favorable. Rizer has a remarkable attitude and just keeps on going. We wish you well, Rizer.

Mary Sinclair and Richard Jackson are doing well, enjoying the mild winter they've had so far in Longmont, CO (temps in the 50's & 60's in mid-January). Mary's uncle was there from London to spend the holidays with them and they had a great time. He's 76 but extremely fit - rambles for miles over the downs and does yoga - so he had Mary climbing through some quite high trails at Rocky Mountain National Park. Five miles in knee-deep snow can be a little

tiring, says Mary! She exaggerates slightly as the trails were only ankle deep, but just one step wide so if they went off-trail they were in knee deep snow. Her uncle was disappointed they couldn't climb Long's Peak (elev. 14,255 ft) but in winter they'd need crampons & ropes. Mary wasn't willing! Estes Park is the stepping off place for the Park and we were there almost every day. It's about 40 minutes NW of Longmont and a gorgeous drive. Work on their house continues. The construction is in the "dry wall in the basement, plaster dust everywhere else" stage but Mary refuses to do any cleaning until the dust settles. They're having a family room, bedroom, bathroom and bar added to finish the basement. They'll be glad when it is completed. They had a lovely evening in Boulder in mid-January at the 19th Annual Mahlerfest concert. They did the 1st Symphony, Songs of a Wayfarer and Blumine which Mary didn't know and was really lovely. Mary says that it is a great festival for a relatively small town.

Kathleen Domingue, daughter of Steve Domingue and Norma Hawes, returned from Germany right before Christmas, and Norma was one happy mom to have her home again. She was in Berlin for 4 months/Fall semester, taking 5 German courses at Humboldt University through the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES) to improve her fluency in German, which is her major. She rented a room from 2 Berlin women in Alexanderplatz, a section of the city very close to the where the Berlin wall once stood. She got along well with her hostesses, though their English was limited. They were exceedingly kind to her, even providing her transportation and helping her learn her way around the city. One was an aspiring singer and took her to several outstanding music performances, including Bertolt Brecht's "Die Dreigroschenoper" (Three Penny Opera, the one that Mac the Knife is from). They were extremely grateful to her for setting up their internet access. She also saw a soccer game in the Olympic Stadium, the famous Nazi stadium, where Jesse Owens won his gold medals. She took a weekend "field trip" to Dresden and saw that city's sights including a famous art museum. She also spent a 3-day weekend in Venice at the home of her parents' good friend Paul. She became good friends with several Berlin students, one of whom accompanied her to attend a concert of one of her favorite rock groups, Franz Ferdinand. Fortunately for Kathleen, all of her friends could speak fluent English. She remains in almost constant contact with her friends via email. Welcome home, Kathleen!

Marilyn Vaché wants to express her gratitude for all the prayers and support of the congregation as she moved from Austin Diagnostic Clinic to her own psychiatric practice. It's going very well, largely owing to computer and phone help from her husband Graylin and the tireless efforts of her practice manager, Vicki Hernandez. Her spare time is taken up with studying the viola, a passion just acquired recently. Her teacher is Stephanie Phillips, a wonderful musician and former CCoA member. Stephanie (a contemporary of Beth Oakes and Lana Harris, also violists who grew up in the church) is the daughter of Bill and Betty Phillips who will be moving back from Panama this month. Daughter Olivia's passion is technical theater; she's been backstage at a number of Kids Acting Productions -- often from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. -- while still fitting in homework and basketball at Austin Waldorf School. Not only is she great at

technical theater, but Olivia scored 12 out of 23 game-winning points in JV basketball against St. Andrew's JV in mid-January. As a family they got to visit Marilyn's brother Tom, his wife Ione, and their three children ages 9, 4, and 1 for Christmas. They had a full morning of gift-opening. When asked if she wanted to open another present, 4 year-old Isabel replied, "No, thank you." We should all be so well satisfied with our portions!

The day after Christmas, **the Nash family** left in two cars to drive up to Silverthorne, Colorado, to stay with Liz's cousins for several days. Their weekend house in Silverthorne (they live in Denver) is at 9000 feet. While those of us in Austin had warm and dry weather, the Nashes were way up in the snow. It was beautiful -- they live in a development that has one house about every 10 acres. The girls, Taylor (Ellie's boyfriend), and Reuel did a bit of downhill skiing, and Liz went cross-country skiing with her cousin. They had to be ferried up and down the hill in their four-wheel drive cars to their house so they could avoid using chains on the road in. After they left Silverthorne, Liz headed in her car to Phoenix to give a paper at the Society of Christian Ethics annual meeting. She stayed over in Flagstaff a few days to have peace and quiet to finish her work. It was great for Liz to reunite in Phoenix with many old Graduate Theological Union friends now that they are scattered across the country. Ellie and Becky Nash had one of their Nutcracker rehearsals at the Dougherty Arts Center on Barton Springs Rd. the night of the ice storm in December (for those folks out of town, it was 1/4 inch of ice!). Their director did not cancel it because she and her family went down in the afternoon while the roads were still clear, so she just made what turned out to be a call that was more hopeful than realistic to continue with the rehearsal. Toward the end of the evening, the Nashes were getting bad reports about the roads, traffic, wrecks, etc. When Liz heard that people were sliding around in their neighborhood and that someone they knew had wrecked his car, Liz called Reuel and asked him to look into making a hotel reservation downtown. They ended up taking the last two rooms at the Extended Stay Suites at 6th and Guadalupe -- not a difficult drive after they finally left the rehearsal at 10:30 p.m. However, they ended up with three extra kids -- a boy Becky's age whose parents live off Bee Caves Rd. and were stuck at home (all roads out of their subdivision were closed), a girl who lives near us whose father spent several hours trying to get her but finally gave up after almost running out of gas and helping a very cold man on foot get to a bus home, and a girl from Georgetown whose parents did (after a couple of hours on the road) make it. The Georgetown family got a room at another nearby hotel. The Nashes were thankful that they were a couple of blocks away from Katz's Deli that "never Kloses" because two of the kids with them had not eaten dinner. By the time Liz figured out that kids needed food, even Domino's Pizza had given up for the night. A late night run over to Katz's for take-out, as well as morning trip there for breakfast, really filled some stomachs. The next day's evening rehearsal was moved to early afternoon after school was canceled. By the time everyone was picked up and taken home, they ended up running into the house for a change of clothes and heading back to the Dougherty. Although they still had a late homework night the next night (because no one was home during the day) and

Liz thinks they could have actually made it home in the ice, she's glad they stayed. They had fun and an adventure with their "guest" kids, and avoided a long night on the road. (Some of the Round Rock folks drove well into the wee hours to make it home in the ice.) And the Nutcracker went very well over two weekend in mid-December, but they were all quite ready to be done (worn out) when it ended.

Nancy Edison reports that her sister, Marjorie Smith, came to visit from Tucson, Arizona over the Christmas and New Year's holiday. Marjorie did get to visit the church and appreciated our friendliness. Nancy enjoyed seeing her, and Marjorie got to see Nancy's 2 grandsons and got her "baby fix" hugging them.

Nodie Murphy's New Orleans' family members continue to struggle with the aftereffects of Katrina. Her brother Chip, his wife Jewelynn and son Charlie were here for a few days in January, staying with the Murphy's son Seth. Nodie reports that they are just worn out.

Former members **Matt and Martha Wilding**, and sons Jake (whom many of us remember as an adorable toddler--now in middle school), Bill, and Ben Wilding continue to thrive in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Matt is managing a research group at Rockwell Collins and Martha has quit her 8th Circuit Court librarian job to stay home with the boys--busy times for all!

Former members **Fred, Juditha, and Gus Burchsted** are doing well in the Boston area. Juditha ended up having 4 hours of surgery to correct a bad umbilical hernia, but she is recuperating well and is back teaching.

Another former member **Carolyn (Chial) Telder** reports that son Doug could not be home for Christmas this year (Lansing, MI) because he is busy preparing for the international meeting of the World Council of Churches in Brazil in February, 2006. Doug works most of the year in Geneva, Switzerland.

Lois and John Drachenberg were sorely missed the first few weeks of January. They both got a terrible, long-lasting intestinal flu bug that pretty well knocked them flat. It was a rough start for the New Year, but they are now on the mend and back in the choir.

Mel and Pat Oakes went to Iowa after Christmas to see the Oakes/Buck family and to overlap with daughter Sarah' visit. Beth and Eugene got away for the New Year's weekend while Mel, Pat, and Sarah held down the fort with Emily, 5, and Ethan, 2 3/4. Unfortunately, Mel got sick with a grim upper respiratory infection and spent the last 3 days of the visit in bed--missing Emily's birthday party and several other activities. As of mid-January, Mel was on the mend and none of the Oakes/Buck family got the bug as they were leaving for Hawaii two days after Mel and Pat left for home. The Maia Quartet performed at a conference there and Eugene, Emily, and Ethan visited with Eugene's brother and his family. Eugene's brother Charles Buck is the UCC conference minister for Hawaii. Sarah made it back to her home in the D.C. area and was back teaching school on Jan. 3.

Tommie Pinkard is recuperating from knee-replacement surgery in early January. This is her second knee replacement and she is especially motivated in her rehab now as she and Doyal are going to be on a tour in March which will include some hiking in Baja California. Another reason for getting well is the

return of soon Chris's family from an extended visit (10 weeks) of his wife Rizza and their daughter Kiana to Rizza's home in the Philippines. Chris, Doyal and Tommie were really looking forward to seeing Kiana and getting reacquainted.

“WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?”

A biblical, theological, historical, cultural, and personal exploration of Jesus' identity, and our relationship to him.

This spring, Whit Bodman and Tom VandeStadt will be offering an adult education series that explores the identity of Jesus from biblical, theological, historical, cultural, and personal perspectives. The goal is to help folks in our church understand Christianity's interpretations and understandings of Jesus in different times and places, and to help us clarify and articulate our own relationship to Jesus. Whit and Tom will participate together in a preaching series, and then host a bi-weekly discussion group from February to April.

The series will be divided into six main topics: Jesus as *King of Kings*, Jesus as *prophet*, Jesus as *savior*, Jesus as *suffering servant*, Jesus as *God*, and Jesus' question: “who do you say that I am?” After exploring the themes that coalesce around Jesus' various titles, folks will be encouraged to write a statement that articulates their own faith in Jesus.

Whit and Tom will take turns preaching on these themes. The lessons' they'll be preaching on and the dates for the after worship discussions are as follows:

February 5, *King of Kings*, Whit preaches, After Worship Forum

1 Sam. 8:4-22

1 Tim 6:6-16

February 12, *King of Kings*, Tom preaches

Psalm 2

Mark 5: 1-20

February 19, *Jesus as prophet*, Whit preaches, After Worship Forum Forum

Amos 5:1-15

Rom. 10:1-9

February 26, *Jesus as prophet*, Tom preaches

Amos 7: 10-17

Luke 4: 14-30

March 5, *Jesus as savior*, Tom preaches, After Worship Forum

Romans 5: 12-21

Matthew 11: 2-6

March 12, *Jesus as savior*, Whit preaches

Psalm 120

John 3:11-21

March 19, *Jesus as suffering servant*, Whit preaches, After Worship Forum

Hosea 1:1-11

Heb. 5:1-10

March 26, Jesus as *suffering servant*, Tom preaches

Isaiah 52: 13 - 53: 12

Luke 9: 18-22

April 2, Jesus as *God*, Whit preaching, After Worship Forum

Ps 82

Heb. 1:1-9

April 9, Jesus as *God*, Palm Sunday, Tom preaches

Colossians 1: 13-20

John 1: 1-14 or I John 1: 1-4

Plus a palm procession text from one of the gospels

ADDRESS CHANGES

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We still need Sunday School assistants for the elementary Sunday School class. Please sign up and join the fun!!!

COFFEE HOUR

Please sign up in the Fellowship Room to be coffee hour hosts on an upcoming Sunday. The coffee hour time is such a good opportunity to visit old friends and meet visitors. We keep coffee and ginger ale and some punch fixings in the pantry in the kitchen. There are usually paper napkins, and we use coffee mugs and punch cups to avoid wasting natural resources. Your menu can be as simple or complicated as you want. Cookies and/or chips and salsa are just fine! If you have questions, talk to Pat Oakes, Tommie Pinkard, or Lynne Lemley.

DEADLINE FOR MARCH VISITOR – FEBRUARY 15