

THE VISITOR

January 2019

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt



Magi from the east follow the star to the Jewish homeland and honor the child they find with gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Gold signifies royalty. This child, Jesus, is king. God's creation attests to it, the heavenly star proclaims it, Jesus is God's choice to be king. King Jesus. This is a very subversive claim. Herod isn't king, Caesar isn't king. Jesus is king.

Frankincense, another gift. The priest burns incense, and sacrifices animal flesh and blood to God on behalf of God's people as a means of seeking God's mercy and forgiveness. Because the people's sin mounts, there's no end to the sacrifice of flesh and blood. Until now. Jesus, the priest, will offer his own flesh and blood as the sacrifice. Jesus, the priest, will die for his people. Hence the third gift, myrrh, oil used to anoint dead bodies.

Gold, frankincense, and myrrh, we think of these gifts as the gifts of the magi, the gifts the magi give to Jesus. But perhaps we can also read them as the gifts God gives to God's people.

To God's people, God gives a king. Not a self-centered, self-aggrandizing king like Herod or a Caesar. Not a king who viciously claws his way to the top of the corrupt pile of greedy, ruthless schemers, a king who'll do anything, and kill anyone, to seize the throne and stay on it to dominate and exploit his subjects. No, a just and righteous king. A king who watches over God's people, cares for them, ensures their well-being, protects them like a good shepherd.

And the gift of the priest who'll make the flesh and blood sacrifice that'll bring God's forgiveness, reconcile God and God's people, and renew the ancient covenant. Not by sacrificing animal flesh and blood, by sacrificing his own flesh and blood.

How we experience life in the United States in the 21st century differs significantly from the ways people experienced life in or near the Jewish homeland in the 1st century. We have no personal experience with kings. We don't live in a weak yet rebellious nation on the periphery of a mighty empire at the height of its power. We don't live in a culture where people accept without question that priests must sacrifice flesh and blood to seek God's mercy and forgiveness. The whole cultural experience of kings ruling from thrones, and cultic priests splashing altars with animal blood, is lost to us.

And therein lays the challenge for us to fully appreciate how subversive it is to proclaim Jesus king, or the spiritual power of calling Jesus the priest and the flesh and blood sacrifice. We don't live in a culture in which those titles, roles, and acts immediately evoke strong political and religious passions. So they don't move us in the same way they moved Matthew's first readers in or near the Jewish homeland in the 1st century.

And yet, though our lives differ significantly from our ancient spiritual ancestors, we're still human, and we still struggle with some of the same perennial human issues. Like our ancestors, we still long for justice and righteousness in a world where powerful people still dominate and oppress. Kings are not part of our cultural experience, so we don't hope for a king to deliver justice and righteousness, and we may not think of Jesus as our king. But like Matthew's first readers, we still regard Jesus as the highest authority on earth when it comes to justice and righteousness.

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And like our spiritual ancestors, we still long for forgiveness, reconciliation, and renewal. Sacrificing an animal is not the first thing that comes to mind for us, but Jesus comes to mind. Jesus is still the most powerful agent of forgiveness, reconciliation, and renewal in our lives.

Jesus was the gift God gave to God's people in the Jewish homeland in the 1st century, and God's people understood God's gift through the cultural realities that were the most evocative, most powerful, most subversive, and most transformative to them.

Jesus is the gift God gives to God's people in the United States, and all over the world, in the 21st century. It's up to us to understand God's gift through the cultural realities that are the most evocative, most powerful, most subversive, and most transformative to us. If not king, priest, or flesh and blood sacrifice, then something else. Something that to us is the most evocative, most powerful, most subversive, most transformative way to understand God's gift, Jesus.

How do you understand Jesus? During Epiphany, give that some deep reflection, and share your thoughts with me, with one another. That's why we're here.

Tom

February Visitor Deadline January 28, 2019

Church Leadership

Trustee Chair	Keith Beresheim
Deacons Chair	Barbara Burnham
Outreach Team	Whit Bodman
Moderator	John Goff
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Bryan Rutherford
Christian Education	Lynne Lemley
	Shaela Rutherford
Youth Sunday School	Sam Clubb (Acting)
Clerk	Jaime Hadley
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Webmaster	Mel Oakes
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

Heart of Texas Association News January

by Liz Nash

On December 11th, I attended the United Methodist annual charge conference of Rolling Hills Community Church of Lago Vista, as I have several times over the years. Rolling Hills is one of three -- to the best knowledge of those present at the charge conference -- churches in the US that are fully affiliated with the United Methodist Church, the United Church of Christ, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the Presbyterian Church (USA). In the United Methodist Church, the charge conference is comprised of all members of the church council, meets with the District Superintendent (the local wider church minister) and among other tasks, reviews and evaluates of its ministry. In the case of Rolling Hills, I have experienced this gathering as time of honest reflection on each area of mission and ministry -- something that the United Methodist Church requires yearly.

I lift up this experience for several reasons. First, I celebrate the ministry of Rolling Hills, a church that does much to reach out and serve as a central part of the life of Lago Vista, growing and changing in its call to serve Christ over the years. Second, I want to lift up the vibrant life of ecumenical ministry that goes on in the Heart of Texas Association. In a denomination that is relatively small in Texas, our Association churches really model in remarkable ways the founding ethos and motto of the United Church of Christ from John 17: "That they may all be one." Six of our twenty one churches are affiliated with two or more denominations. Hope United Georgetown and United Christian Austin are affiliated with both the UCC and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Church of the Savior Cedar Park is affiliated with the

Alliance of Baptists, the UCC, and the American Baptist Churches -- USA. Trinity Church of Austin and Faith United Woodsboro are affiliated with the United Methodist Church and the UCC. And, as I noted above, Rolling Hills Lago Vista maintains four denominational affiliations. Our ministers, too, have come from these various denominations, and we are finding that there is more and more interest in our churches and in the UCC from ministers coming from outside the UCC. When we find ways to serve in Christ's ministry together, we strengthen the body of Christ.

Further, it is my experience that, when our churches can look outside themselves as they maintain strong ties to others, they find new ideas and new perspectives from the experience of different worshipping communities and are able to do ministry in authentic partnership with others. Ideas flow, resources are shared, and churches don't have to figure everything out on their own. It is also my experience that, as churches honestly examine their ministry from time to time, they have a clearer sense of their call and mission going forward.

As we enter a new year, I celebrate the churches among us that maintain faithful ties to multiple denominations, and I celebrate those churches who are UCC "only" while also working in so many open and life-giving partnerships with others -- youth ministries, mission trips, food pantries, senior ministries, social justice work, homeless outreach, and the list goes on. May we continue and grow in following Jesus together.

Blessings in Christ
Liz Nash, Association Minister

Personals by Pat Oakes

Reuel Nash was the chief of Santa's helpers for the annual Open Door Dinner held on Christmas Day. **Jaime Hadley** has been chief the past several years as the **Nashes** were out of town. At noon there was a short service in the sanctuary, followed by a holiday feast. **Reuel** reports that he is not sure how many folks were served but says that **Tom** lost count at 50 and saw the line was at least that long again, and then more came. **Reuel** is saying between 137 and 5000!! There were at least 10-15 volunteers from outside the church plus church members and their families who helped with setup, serving, and cleaning up after dinner. Many of the volunteers found us through Front Steps who saw our event on a calendar. One couple came from Colorado to be in Austin for the holidays and contacted us to volunteer. The dinner was the inaugural of our new warming oven (in past years one was rented.) It was decided that it made sense to purchase one since within a few years the cost would be amortized. This year we also had a "keep cold things cold" device. **Reuel** describes it as being like a kids' swimming pool filled with ice for the salad bar. There were no leftovers except for rolls. Several people left with a "take away" plate. Many thanks to all who helped in any way!



12/23/18 John Goff and our new warming cabinet to use for the Open Door Christmas dinners

Gail Christeson and **John Goff** enjoyed attending the American Geophysical Union meeting in Washington, D.C. in November. While they were there they were thinking that they would not get to see the Museum of African-American History and Culture as tickets, while free, are often hard to come by. However, they were delighted to find that the AGU had arranged for an evening at the museum for conference attendees. They found it to be very moving and filled with more information than they could absorb in one visit.

The candlelight carol service on Sunday, December 16th, was beautiful and filled to capacity. The readers and lighters for the service were **Faye** and **Andy Dierksen**, **Carolyn Thompson**, **Amelia Fulbright**, **René Slataper**, **Naomi Rutherford**, and **Bryan Rutherford**. Many thanks to **Jaime Hadley** who was the party organizer for the festive party which followed the service. It was wonderful to see eight members of the extended **Towery** family there. **John Towery**, who was the pastor of the church from 1959-1989, and his wife **Eleanor**, were beloved by

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12/25/18 A merry band of cooks, servers, and helpers getting ready for the Christmas dinner for the homeless--back left Reuel Nash, Dennis Murphy at the sink, and Hector Gonzalez back right with the apron

Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes

the congregation. Those of us who have been at the church for many years saw the Towery “kids” grow up. Son **Ches** and daughter **Mary** live in the Austin area and daughter **Sally** lives in Massachusetts. It is hard to believe that **Ches**, **Sally**, and **Mary** are now grandparents.



12/16/18 Back--Krystal Towery with her dad Ches Towery; front Danny and Mary Towery Masters, granddaughters Clara and Agnes, and their parents Monica and Ricky Masters



12/16/18 Naomi Rutherford did a fine job with her scripture reading as her dad Bryan helped her by holding up the Bible.

Folks who come to our church know that we have wonderful music thanks to **Nodie Murphy**, the trio, and the choir. One of the congregation’s favorite seasons of the year is the Sundays in Advent when the trio cuts loose with “Jesus, What a Wonderful Child” which you can see and hear on the newly remodeled church Web site. Go to <https://congregationalchurchofaustin.org/ministry/music-and-fine-arts/>. After you have enjoyed that, feel free to explore the rest of the site. <https://congregationalchurchofaustin.org>

Nodie Murphy was filled with a bit of trepidation when she realized that the usual trio would be gone on Sunday, the 23rd of December. Who would be able to fill in? In a congregation as talented as ours, she reached out came up with a wonderful solution. She asked **Barbara Burnham** if she would play the piano with her son **Robin Rosson** on cello and **Robin’s** wife **Julia** on the flute. **Julia** often plays the flute at another church on Sundays, but she made time for us on the 23rd. They all agreed and lovely music ensued. **Julia** shared that she first met **Robin** when she was playing the flute at age 14 and he was 17 playing the cello and **Florence Castle** (now 102 1/2) was the pianist for the trio. With a twinkle in her eye, **Julia** confessed that she developed quite a crush on **Robin** and “the rest is history!” **Chester Rosson** was in the congregation with granddaughters **Samantha** and **Rebecca** who also enjoyed the music. In place of the choir’s anthem, **Nodie** also recruited **Amelia Fulbright**, vocal, and **Bill Beardall**, guitar.



12/23/18 Julia Ross, Barbara Burnham, and Robin Rosson subbing wonderfully for the trio

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Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes



12/23/18 Amelia Fulbright and Bill Beardall singing "Jesus Our Brother, Kind and Good"

that she can walk further using a walker. Once she gets stronger she is confident she will be able to walk without a walker. We are all pulling for her to dance again! She is so looking forward to going home—and coming to church. We have all missed her and her husband **Chencho**.

Marilyn Gaddis reports another "Birthday Milestone" this year in the **Gaddis/Carruthers** household! **George** celebrated his 95th birthday on October 19th! However, the celebration took place Thanksgiving weekend when most folks were in town. Over 40 relatives and friends shared pictures, stories, and good Texas barbecue with the "birthday boy!" Also, **George** was honored at a Veteran's Day Celebration at Forest Trail Elementary School where his great-niece, **Kristina Bishop**, is the music teacher and her children; Lila and Isaac, great-great niece and nephew are students.



11/18 The amazing 95-year-old George Carruthers celebrated Veteran's Day Celebration at Forest Trail Elementary School where his great-niece, Kristina Bishop, is the music teacher and her children, Lila and Isaac, great, great niece and nephew are students.

We also celebrated with our own talent on Sunday, the 30th. **Barbara** continued on the piano and **Tony Rogers** on cello and they were joined by **Andy Ross** on oboe, **Dave Ross** on recorder, and **Sara Ross** on viola. We could probably call this the **Burnham, Rogers, Ross, Ross, Ross** quintet—or **BRRRR!**



12/30/18 Andy Ross, oboe, Dave Ross, recorder, Sara Ross, violin, Barbara Burnham, piano, and Tony Rogers, cello--The BRRRR Quintet

Beth Placek, after nearly dying from sepsis, spending more than 3 weeks in ICU in October, and having been in a rehab facility all of November and December, is planning to go home in the next week or so. She is working hard to build up strength so

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

For the first time ever, we have a poetic submission for news submitted by the inimitable Joy Penticuff.
Read and Enjoy!



11/18 Joy Penticuff and her valiant steed Armani jumping in her recent competition

Here's a story of **Joy** and her wonderful steed A very sweet horse of the thoroughbred breed.
Joy's husband calls the horse by the nickname "Our Money"
And what happened to horse and rider you might think is funny.

Learn of Joy's unusual adventure

That happened at the Southwestern Equestrian Center, A place where only the bravest will enter.
The competition over jumps measured in feet and inches, with ten other riders jumping the same fences.

It was in early November, and **Joy'll** always remember.

It was a first in her years of competitive riding. It was proof of a reality that's not really hiding.
It was proof you can't know what will happen in a show.

Her esteemed trainer was there for support and advice. **Joy** memorized the course and knew this would be nice.
She was ready to show off her great skill and daring.
She just knew that soon the audience would be cheering.

She entered the show ring confident and bold, her horse eager to jump and fine to behold.

There were ten other riders on their horses that day.

All of them convinced they could master the fray. **Joy** and **Armani** they thought they could best.
But **Joy** and **Armani** knew they would win this contest.

They started out beautifully, jumping the jumps; they were well on their stride, having a wonderful ride.

They took jumps on the right, jumps on the left, the first of the two jumps diagonally set.

They were moving so well, and the jumps just seemed tiny.

But **Armani** jumped and **Joy** fell on her hiney.

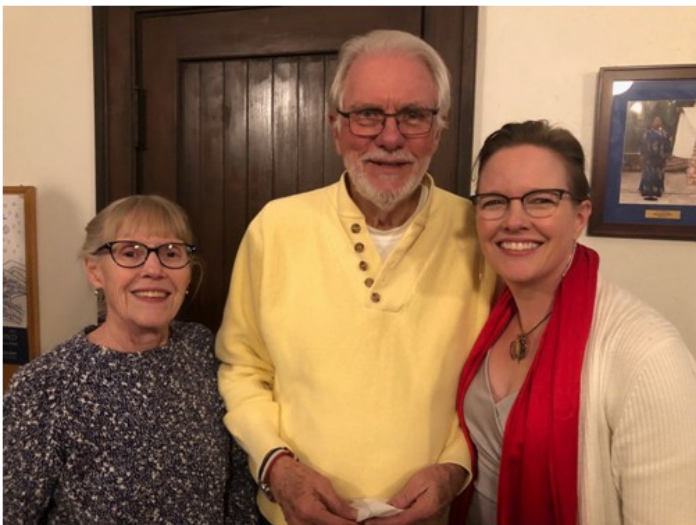
For the very first time in her horse showing career, she fell off her horse and heard gasps and not cheers.
But she dusted herself off and gathered some moxie. Entered two more competitions and rode really foxy.

Won some nice ribbons and drank some libation. But most of all earned a unique appellation:
"After taking a fall in the middle of a course, she's the older lady who gets back on her horse."

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes



12/16/18 A view of the church just before the candlelight carol service



12/16/18 Fran and Rambie Briggs and daughter Paula Fracasso enjoyed coming to the candlelight carol service



12/16/18 Bill Phillips and Mel Oakes visiting after the candlelight service

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes



12/16/18 Precious Henry Atlas Kent came to church and Sunday school with his mom Amy Rivera Kent, our Sunday school teacher



12/16/18 There was a wonderful spread in the fellowship hall after the candlelight carol service--Amelia Fulbright, Becky Nash, Andrea Low, ?, Bill Beardall, ??, Shaela Rutherford, Nodie Murphy, Jason Parkhill, Bob Garrett



12/25/18 Annie Nash and her boyfriend Sooner Dawsen and his mom Clemma and Liz Nash



12/25/18 Old friends volunteering to help with the Christmas dinner--Alex VandeStadt, Tess and Emily Howicz, and Chance Hartfield

History Corner

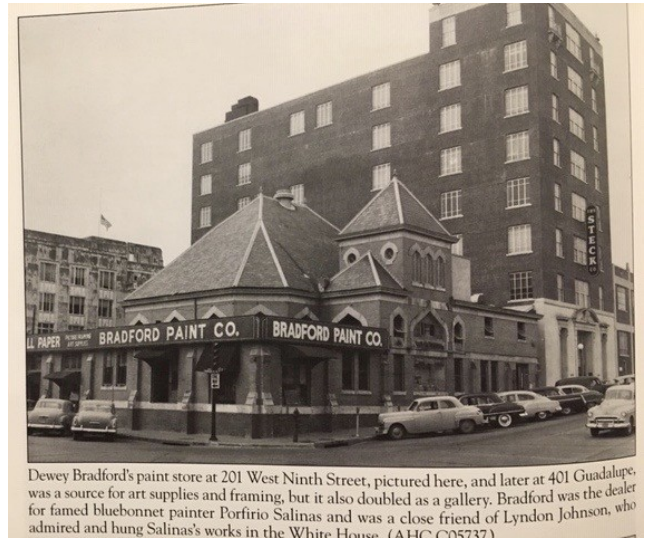
Pat and **Mel Oakes** had a good time tracking down these pictures of the old church building and trying to figure out how the church was situated at the corner of 9th and Colorado. The most exciting find this month was the 3rd picture which was sent to **Pat** by the daughter of former neighbors. **Thelma** and **Weber Jenkins** lived across Barton Hills Drive (out their kitchen window). **Pat** remembered that Weber had worked for Bradford Paint Co. after WWII, so she contacted their daughter **Jo Gayle** to see if she had any memory of her dad working there and she replied, "Yes, I even remember my dad working at the store at 9th and Colorado. When I was a kid, I rode the bus downtown (from South Austin) all the time after school to meet my mom to go shopping or something and we would then walk up to Bradford's at 9th and Colorado to wait for my dad to get off work."



About 1920 The First Congregational Church of Austin, Texas (built in 1906)—on the SW corner of W. 9th St. and Colorado. Remember that the stained glass windows in our current sanctuary came from the original 1906 building.



11/11/18 The intersection of 9th and Colorado, SW corner, where the original church building was located. Note again the entrance to what was the Steck Building



About 1945-- In the winter of 1922-23, the church decided to move to the University area, and purchased the present site at Twenty-third and San Antonio Streets. Note the entrance to the Steck Building in the photo above. The church site/building was sold to Bradford Paint Company who converted it to a store and gallery. From the book LOST AUSTIN, the text below the photo reads, "Dewey Bradford's paint store at 201 West Ninth Street, pictured here, and later at 401 Guadalupe, was a source for art supplies and framing, but it also doubled as a gallery. Bradford was the dealer for famed bluebonnet painter Porfirio Salinas and was a close friend of Lyndon Johnson, who admired and hung Salinas's works in the White House." Note on the far left that there is a wallpaper area of the business.



About 1930—the Steck Building was built in 1928 immediately adjacent to the Congregational church. After much discussion and several diagrams, it was determined that the front of the church was on W. 9th St.