

# THE VISITOR

January 2020

**The Congregational Church of Austin    United Church of Christ**

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**Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt**



**W**e recently read from John's gospel, the Word became flesh.  
That may be my favorite passage from the Bible.

The Word became flesh.

I like to think the Word *becomes* flesh. Over and over again.

The Word becomes flesh when people don't just say, God loves you, but when they say, *I love you* or *we love you*, as well.

The Word becomes flesh when people don't just say, may God help you, but when they say, *I will help you* or *we will help you*, as well.

When people say, God demands justice and *we demand justice*, the Word becomes flesh.

When people embody God's spirit and act in ways that are holy and wholesome, the Word becomes flesh.

When has the Word become flesh in our church?

When were you the recipient of someone else's love, help, or care?

When did someone else's passion for justice rub off on you?

When did you experience someone else's holy and wholesome presence?

When did God's spirit, embodied in someone at church, touch your life in some way?

When were you the one who embodied God's spirit?

When were you the one who loved, helped, or cared for another?

When did your passion for justice inspire another to act?

When were you a holy and wholesome presence to another?

And how about those outside our church?

When did you and others in church love, help, and care for people outside our church?

When did you and others in church demand justice for people outside our church?

When were you and others in church a holy and wholesome presence to people outside our church?

When did you and others in church embody God's spirit and touch the lives of people outside our church?

We've just come through Advent, the season of pregnancy. And Christmas, the season of birth. Now we enter Epiphany, the season of manifestation.

The Word becoming flesh. Flesh manifesting the Word. Flesh embodying the Word.

May the Word become flesh yet again in our church. Again and again. To those inside our church and those outside our church. Through you. All of you.

**Tom**

## **February Visitor Deadline January 24, 2020**

### **Church Leadership**

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 January

by Liz Nash

I share with joy the ordination of **Will Nelson** on Sunday, December 22nd at Church of the Savior in Cedar Park. **Will** has been called to be the pastor of Union Congregational Church, UCC in Three Lakes, Wisconsin. We send **Will** off with our blessings and prayers for a fruitful ministry among the people of Union Congregational and Three Lakes.

At our Fall Meeting, we voted to give travel scholarships to all UCC youth and adult chaperones from this Association who go to the National Youth Event by voting to distribute \$8750 in money for this purpose from our Association budget. We anticipate that those scholarships will be about \$125 per person based on past numbers.

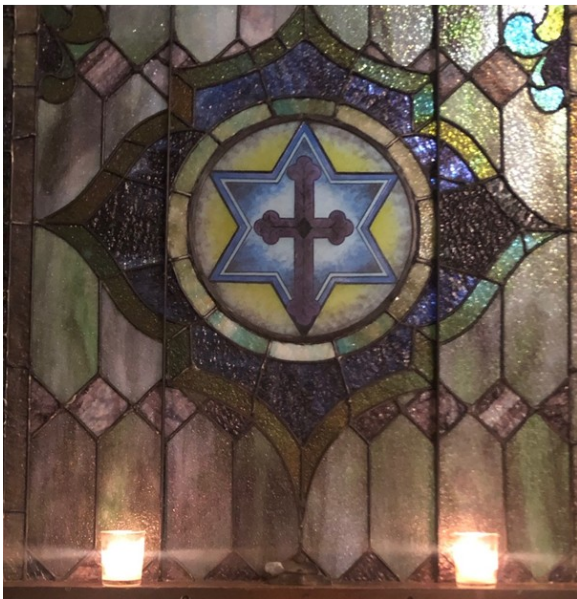
The National Youth Event (NYE), held every four years, is the largest gathering in the UCC, often bringing together 4000 people. We now partner with the Christian Church/Disciples of Christ in this event. I have been several times, and I know that it is a moving faith experience that those who go will never forget. The speakers are always outstanding, the worship is uplifting, the opportunities to meet UCC and DOC youth from all over the country are unparalleled, the choice of workshops is varied and plentiful, and the opportunities for service add to the experience. This year's NYE will be at Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana, July 22-25. It is for youth who have completed 6th through 12th grades. The registration fee (which includes dorm lodging, meals during NYE, and event registration) is \$375. A registration link is coming soon, but normally the registration deadline is in the late spring. The link for NYE is here: <http://www.uccpages.org/nye2020/>, and you can find videos of highlights from the past two NYEs here: <https://www.ucc.org/youth/nye/media-gallery> and I hope many of our youth will be able to join in this great, faith-building event.

We rejoice with Weimar UCC in the calling of their new pastor, **Rev. Juvenal Cervantes**. **Rev. Cervantes** will be moving to Weimar from Greeley, Colorado next June in order to allow family to finish the school year. He will be preaching at Weimar twice in the coming months. Our brothers in Christ, **Gerry Metzger** and **Karl Tewold**, have been providing pulpit supply to support Weimar in this time of waiting. We look forward to welcoming **Juvenal Cervantes** to this Association.

Blessings in Christ  
**Liz Nash**, Association Minister

## Personals by Pat Oakes

It certainly looked a lot like Christmas on Sunday evening, Dec. 15, for the annual carol and candlelight service which was followed by a festive party in the fellowship hall—complete with eggnog. Many thanks to the Deacons who organized the party and to everyone who brought the delicious holiday treats. There was a good group of folks including **Ches Towery** with his daughter **Krystal** and her boyfriend. **Mary Towery Masters** missed coming due to a prior engagement but sent everyone her good wishes. **Ches** and **Mary** are the offspring of **Eleanor** and **John Towery**. **John** was the pastor of the church from 1959-1989.



12/15/19 The carol and candlelight service at church was beautifully decorated



12/15/19 Whit Bodman and Andrea Low really brightened up the party after the candlelight service



12/15/19 The carol and candlelight service was well-attended



12/15/19 The Christmas party following the carol and candlelight service--l-r Bethany Leach with daughter Zella, Bill Campbell, (back) Pastor Tom VandeStadt talking to Scott Neeley, Stephen Russell, Andy Ross in the plaid shirt, and Beth Placek visiting with Sara Ross who was celebrating her birthday

**Personals (cont)**  
**by Pat Oakes**

**C**hristmas Day was also special at the church—once again, the open door Christmas dinner. **Reuel Nash**, chief wrangler for the annual affair this year, reports that about 100 guests were fed plus more plates of food for the volunteers. **Reuel** reports that he threw out about 2 spoonfuls of food -- everything else was eaten. Many thanks to all who brought food, cooked, and worked.



12/25/19 Chief wrangler Reuel Nash, Nathan Leach and daughter Hattie, Sylvia (a friend of Hector's), Bethany Leach, Hector Gonzales, and Bill Beardall getting ready for the annual Christmas Day dinner

**Pam Tucker** has had a most extraordinary, emotional experience in 2019—finding out that her great-grandfather (many generations back) **William Tucker** back in 1619 in Hampton, VA—owned some of the first slaves to land in America—and the first named African-American baby born here. Please take the time to look at both links—the first one has more to do with **Pam** and her meeting with **Wanda Tucker** in Hampton, VA—thought to be a descendant of the slave child **William** who was the baptized child of slaves **Anthony** and **Isabella**. The second link is a more thorough look at slavery in this country in the past 400 years. **Pam's** wonderful mother **Norma** was interested in family genealogy and the information she compiled helped bring together descendants of both the white **Tuckers** and the descendants of the slave **Tuckers**. **Pam** is still processing what all this means. <https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/nation/2019/08/21/wanda-tucker-angola-slavery-1619-history-america-black-family/2016591001/> .

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As **Bill Campbell** mentioned a couple times in church recently, he underwent the process of kidney donor screening during 2019. That extremely rigorous process (involving his wife **Victoria** getting him to and from appointments) which took several months, recently came to an end. After passing a myriad of screening procedures, including various scans, probes, blood tests and a biopsy, he was ultimately rejected as a donor on December 6. The cause was something that showed up on echocardiogram that would only become a concern if he were living with only one kidney. (He learned through this process that the kidneys and heart have a lot of reciprocal impact on each other). It was quite disappointing to get rejected as it appeared to mean that **Judy** (his ex-wife), the person for whom he was donating, would likely have to remain on dialysis for roughly three

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## Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes

more years until she could rise to the top of the waiting list for a kidney from a deceased donor. However, a miraculous thing occurred when, just four days after **Bill** was rejected, she received a call to immediately come in for a transplant because a perfectly matched kidney had become available from a person going off life support in a distant part of the country. There is a protocol in the transplant world that when a perfectly matched kidney is available, a person can jump to the top of the waiting list. A perfect match means blood type match plus a match on several parameters of tissue type matching and an absence of antibodies in the recipient that would attack the specific kidney available for transplant. The doctors say getting a perfect match is so rare; it's like winning the lottery. Among the things **Bill** learned from this experience was that waiting lists for kidneys and other organs for transplant are long and growing longer in the US. On the supply side, an unintended consequence of reductions in deaths from automobile accidents is a reduction in donor organs. A sad development from a societal perspective is that organs from opioid overdose victims are a growing source of donor organs. On the demand side, our aging population and the epidemic of diabetes increase the need for donor organs. He also learned that at least one European country previously experiencing long waiting lists quickly eliminated its waiting lists by requiring people to opt out of having their organs used for transplants after death rather than requiring people to opt in to being a donor upon death. **Bill** also learned there is a tremendous nationwide infrastructure supporting organ donations and that a lot of super dedicated people make it all work.

The first week of December **Carolyn Thompson** made a quick trip back to Boston thinking she would beat the winter weather, but an early snowstorm nixed that. It is good that she had not gotten rid of her snow boots. Besides a good visit with her daughter, **Catherine**, and family, she visited with quite a few friends. She ran into several in local shops, met some for lunch and coffee, and had time to chat with many who lingered after church on Sunday for the annual Alternative Christmas Fair that raises money for non-profit groups. However, **Carolyn** emphatically states that she is not going to make that trip in the winter again!

Dennis and Nodie Murphy ended the year on a high note when they finally got to see their most recently-born grandchild, **Adalyn Quinn Murphy**, alive and in person! She's over a year old and is discovering the world with gusto. **Ned (Ben)** and his wife **Faye**, along with **Adalyn** and her older brother **James**, travelled down from Minnesota. **Ned's** sister, **Sarah**, her husband **Larbi**, and children **Dehbia** and **Ryan** drove up from San Antonio, and their eldest child, **Randy**, arrived from Atlanta, so all five grandchildren were present. **Seth** joined his siblings **Sarah** and **Ned** to complete the gathering of the clan for a rousing, raucous and love-filled celebration in Round Rock.



12/25/19 l-r— Ryan Sennour, James Murphy, Dennis with Nodie holding Adalyn Murphy, Randy Sennour, and his sister Dehbia

It was wonderful to see the **Lytle** family at church on the 22nd. They were in town from Yakima, WA, where they live now after several years working in Malawi. **Heather** (whose parents live in San Antonio) is working as an OBGYN at the Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic. **Zac** is currently a stay-at-home dad and he spends his spare time on home renovations as well as occasionally skiing and cycling. They hope they will be able to come again soon.

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**Personals (cont)**  
by Pat Oakes



12/22/19 Abigail, 4, Heather, Oliver, 18 months, and Zac Lytle were in town for church just before Christmas

**M**el and Pat Oakes had a great time with their daughter Sarah and her husband Joe Pierce during the holidays. Sarah, who came a day earlier than Joe, made great use of her time helping her dad clean out the gutters and remove leaves from the roof (she volunteered!) and helping her mom reorganize a closet. She and Joe are great cooks and served up some delicious meals, too. Pat and Mel enjoyed seeing long-time friends of Sarah's who came by for a visit. The 4 of them were able to attend the 60th wedding anniversary party of their oldest friends here in Austin.

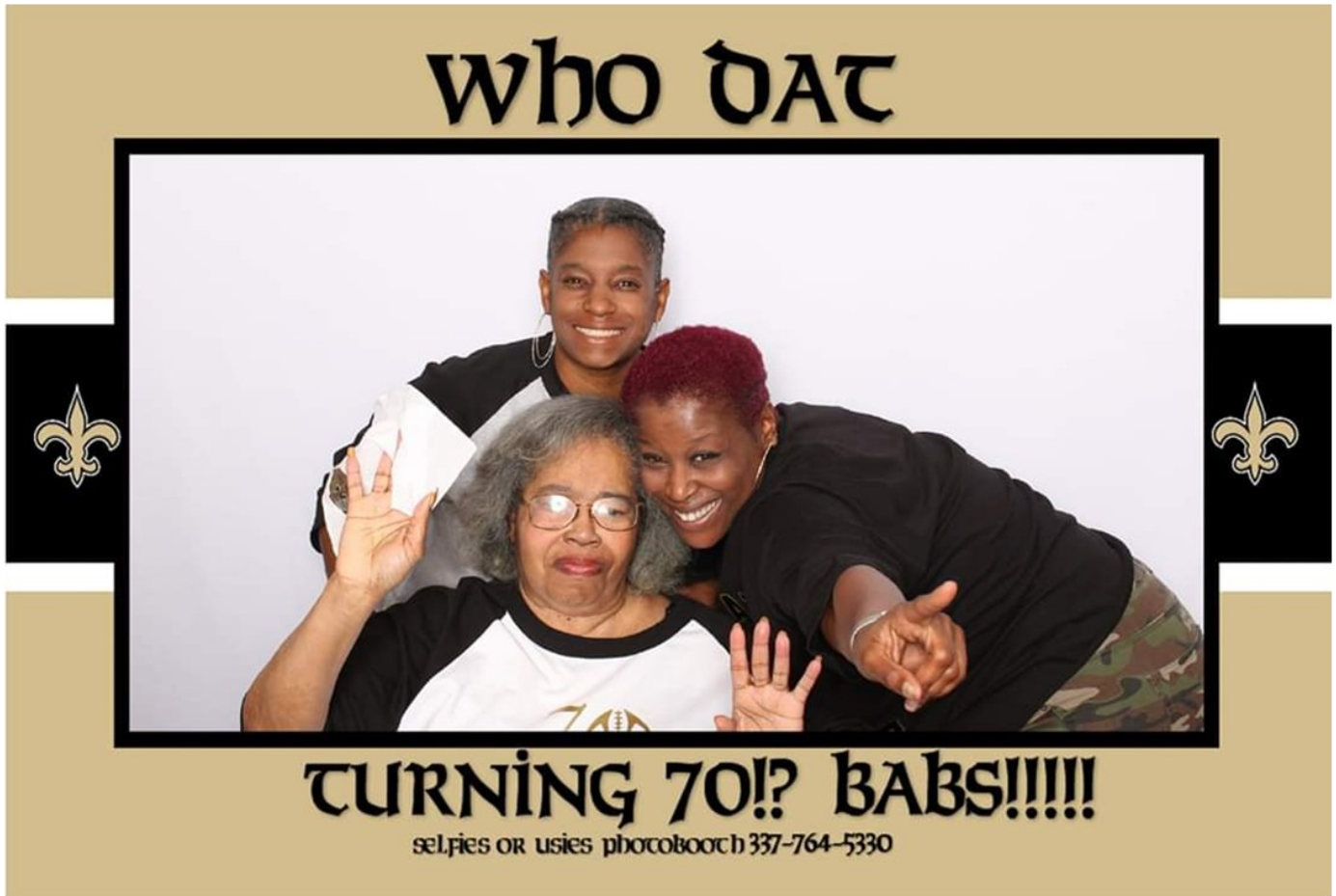


12/25/19 Pat and Mel Oakes enjoyed a wonderful visit from their daughter Sarah and her husband Joe Pierce at Christmas

**CHRISTMAS MEAL PICTURES  
BY FAYE DIERKSEN**



**Personals (cont)**  
by Pat Oakes



This picture is in the better-late-than-never category—worth waiting for!!!. Warinda Harris' mother Barbara Johnson had a wonderful 70th birthday celebration in Louisiana with family and friends in late October. Here she is with daughters Warinda Harris and Tiffany Johnson

## History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

The People's Community Clinic, which started in our church basement, is celebrating 50 years of existence. The clinic relocated to 2909 N. I-35 some years ago and is now located in a new and even bigger facility at 1101 Camino La Costa. The church is proud of its long-time connection to PCC and of the clinic's commitment to helping provide quality health care for so many central Texans.

Austin American-Statesman (Austin, Texas) • 12 Nov 2004, Fri • Page 15 

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### People's clinic: Caring for Austin for 35 years

**W**hat do Barton Springs, KMFA and the People's Community Clinic have in common? They are Austin landmarks that have withstood the test of time.

One of these, People's Community Clinic, is turning 35 and is having a reunion to celebrate. This milestone is a time to reflect on what we have accomplished and to refocus on the current health-care needs of our community.

People's Community Clinic is a reflection of Austin and its evolution over three decades. When the clinic was founded in 1970, in the basement of the Congregational Church on "the Drag" across from the University of Texas campus, it served hundreds of mostly Anglo college students, musicians and other young people who had no health insurance. Much of what the clinic provided were routine screenings and women's health services.

Many of these early patients have become community and business leaders. Recently, we have unearthed wonderful photos of our founders — young, long-haired doctors and nurses who saw the need for affordable health care in Austin. They volunteered their hearts and hands to create a vision of a healthier city, a vision that stands strong today.

Over 35 years, People's Community Clinic has evolved from hippies to households. Now, most of our patients are mothers and fathers employed by small businesses that cannot afford to provide health insurance for their workers. These workers build and clean our homes, care for our children and perform an array of other services for our community. Most are minority.

To meet the needs of our shifting demographics, in the early 1990s we moved into a modern facility on the east side of campus, close to both downtown workers and the families we serve. We now employ 80 full- and part-time medical and administrative staff, many of whom are graduates of the best medical schools in the country, including UT.

We are about to complete the most recent renovation of the clinic to increase capacity. Our medical teams will have more space to treat patients and share information. Our lab, pharmacy and medical records are being enlarged. And our patients will gain greater privacy and comfort — a far cry from the modest church basement where the clinic got its start.

But some things have not changed. We remain the largest independent primary care facility in Austin, not affiliated with any religious, governmental or hospital group. People's Community Clinic provides

**Reunion celebration**  
People's Community Clinic marks its 35-year reunion from 2 to 5 p.m. Saturday at the clinic, 2909 N. I-35. See [www.pccclinic.org](http://www.pccclinic.org) for details.

comprehensive health and wellness services on a sliding scale to anyone who needs it, regardless of neighborhood, income bracket or personal belief. From family planning to prenatal care to disease management, our independence allows us to adapt to our community's changing health-care needs.

Our successes are many, including an immunization rate of 92 percent — significantly higher than the national average of 62 percent for Medicaid patients. Among the participants in our teen prenatal and parenting program's five-year history, only nine percent have had a second pregnancy in the first year after delivery, as compared to the national rate of 22 percent. We are implementing a disease registry to track our patients' complicated case histories and adding other new technologies to make us more efficient. We're doing all this without losing our Austin-based values of treating each patient with dignity.

As was the case in the early 1970s, People's Community Clinic continues to be part of the health-care solution for our city — to provide greater access to affordable primary health care. Each of our 30,000 annual patient visits costs less than one-fourth the cost of a trip to the emergency room. As a result, the clinic saves local taxpayers an enormous amount of money. And we are not slowing down. As a matter of fact, we are striving to increase patient capacity by another 20 percent, or 6,000 appointments, per year — hence our three-year, \$10 million Capacity Campaign.

As we celebrate our rich history this week, we must remain cognizant of the 280,000 Central Texans who still do not have health insurance. Our legacy at People's Community Clinic will be what we do for these families, even more than what we have accomplished in the past 35 years.

If you, a family member or friend have ever sought care, or provided care, under one of our two roofs — or even made care possible through your support of our work — please join our reunion on Saturday. You will be greeted as a member of the People's Community Clinic extended family.

Bash is a member of the board at People's Community Clinic and a professor of astronomy at UT-Austin.