

# THE VISITOR

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

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**Rev. Amelia Fulbright**



**Why Do We Gather?"  
Rev. Amelia K. Fulbright**

Dear Friends,

**W**hen will life ever get back to normal? It is the perennial question of pandemic life. We thought we might be heading in that direction, and then we surged back into Stage 4 coronavirus restrictions here in Austin.

On the other hand, as many astute observers of culture have remarked over the past year, perhaps we actually don't want things to go back precisely to what they were before. "Normal" was not working for significant portions of our community, both locally and nationally, even globally. Perhaps a better question is, *"How do we get to a life that is more stable, sustainable, and hopeful for us all?"*

It occurs to me that this is a better question for a church like ours to consider, as well, as we engage this transitional phase of ministry together. In late August and September, I will be attending a series of trainings dedicated to the specific processes of the interim period, known as Focus Points:

**HERITAGE**– Reviewing how the congregation has been shaped and formed

**LEADERSHIP**– Reviewing the member needs and its ways of organizing and developing new and effective leadership

**MISSION**– Defining and redefining sense of purpose and direction

**CONNECTIONS**– Discovering all the relationships a faith community builds outside of itself

**FUTURE**– Developing congregational and pastoral profiles

Once I have completed the trainings and added some tools to my tool belt, we'll be able to get to work envisioning and then building our new more stable, sustainable, hopeful normal. In the meantime, I want to share with you a little about my general approach to this transitional period:

My goal is to keep things going at the Congregational Church of Austin, while also helping us to get off the treadmill long enough to assess and remember why keeping things going remains vital to us. I'll be the annoying person in meetings who keeps asking why? and how? and what if?

But besides slowing down and asking why? I hope to cultivate space where we can grieve the losses (big and small) that change inevitably brings, and when needed---make changes with care and intention, having faith that God can and will do a new thing among us.

Along those lines, I am preparing a sermon series for August around the question, “Why do we gather?” Pandemic life has called into question many things about why and how we gather as human beings---for work, for school, for social life, and yes, for religious community. *Our sacred scriptures tell us “for where two or three are gathered in my name, I’m there with them” (Matthew 18:20, CEB).* We have a sense that, as Christians, we should gather because it is where we will encounter the Divine, and yet it can be easy to forget how and why this is true.

In this sermon series, I will attempt humbly to engage these questions, in conversation with Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus, another faith community in the liminal space of transition. See below for an outline of what to expect; I hope you’ll tune in to our worship livestream and let me know your thoughts as we wonder about these things together!

### **WHY DO WE GATHER?**

Aug. 1: “We Come Here To Be Fed:” Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15; John 6:24-35

Aug. 8: “We Come Here To Tell the Truth:” Ephesians 4:25-5:2

Aug. 15: “We Come Here To Grow Wise:” Proverbs 9:1-6; Ephesians 5:15-20

Aug. 22: “We Come Here To Grow Bold:” Ephesians 6:10-20

**May the peace of Christ be with you,**

**Pastor Amelia**

## **August Visitor Deadline August 21, 2021**

### **Church Leadership**

Deacons Chair	Jen Howicz
Outreach Team	open
Moderator	Joy Penticuff
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Jaime Hadley
Christian Education Coordinators	open
Youth Sunday School	open
Clerk	Reuel Nash
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Webmaster	Mel Oakes
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

## Heart of Texas Association News

July

by Liz Nash

The Annual Meeting of the South Central Conference (SCC) was held on Saturday, June 12th, online. Although there is a loss to us from not being together in person, it was an excellent gathering, full of joy and good sharing. All of that is thanks to outgoing SCC Board President from our Association, **Nikki Stahl**; the great work of the North Texas Association; and those who helped behind the scenes. At the meeting, we learned that, after this very difficult year, Slumber Falls Camp is filling up in its camps this summer, our churches have been generous in their giving to the South Central Conference (through Our Church's Wider Ministry), and three of the four Associations in the South Central Conference have voted to participate in the Unified Fitness Review Committee. The Heart of Texas Association has not yet voted to join this committee, but we are moving forward in the process of deciding by the time it is needed next spring. Those elected to SCC committees and offices from the Heart of Texas Association include **Trent Williams** of Friends Congregational College Station as SCC Board Vice President, **Brooke Dooley** of Friends Congregational (a Member in Discernment) as the Youth/Young Adult SCC Board representative, and **Sonja Phillips** from Friedens UCC Geronimo to the SCC Nominating Committee. In addition, we offer thanks to **Cindy Miller** of St. John's UCC Burton and **Jenny Russell** of Touchstone Community Church Boerne for serving on the SCC Nominating Committee this year. We also offer our support and gratitude for **Debra Joseph** of the New Orleans Association as she begins her term as Board President of the SCC, and give thanks for the important interim ministry work of **Campbell Lovett** as he finishes his time with us.

**Arlene Turner**, Pastor of Bethany Congregational San Antonio, will be presenting a workshop, "The Urgency and Challenges of Bible Literacy," on Thursday, July 8th, at the upcoming virtual UCC General Synod. Congratulations, **Arlene!** **Arlene's** workshop was also part of our SCC Annual Meeting. **Arlene's** workshop, along with the other General Synod workshops, will be recorded and available for viewing by those registered for Synod from July 11th-18th. Any of us can register for General Synod

at <https://www.generalsynod.org/>. The cost is only \$100 for visitors, with the opportunity to celebrate, worship, and learn with folks from across the UCC.

**Mary Wilson**, retired pastor of Church of the Savior, has taken on a new position. She is the Director of ChrysalisQ.org, a support and resource group for LGBTQI+ families. We congratulate **Mary**. Her skills and calling will bring real gifts to this new organization.

There will be a Celebration of Life for **Jewel Johnson**, Pastor Emeritus of St. Peter's Church of Coupland and longtime minister among us, at 4 pm on Wednesday, July 7th, at St. Peter's. **Jewel** died on July 2nd, 2020. I know many of you knew **Jewel** and his years of faithful and excellent Christian ministry. Glen Schoeneberg will officiate.

Finally, as many of you know, I recently submitted my notice to the Heart of Texas Association that I am retiring. I have offered to serve until a new Association Minister is brought onboard or until the Fall Association Meeting, whichever is sooner. The new Association Minister will have a good start in working with our new SCC Conference Minister, **Phil Hodson**. My heart and prayers will always be with the generous ministry of this Association and our churches. You are great disciples and wonderful people!

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

## Personals by Pat Oakes

Our church has been truly blessed over the past 5 months with wonderful folks, some familiar to us and other folks we got to know, filling the pulpit (remotely, of course) during the time the search committee was looking for our Designated Term Pastor. We are delighted that Rev. **Amelia Fulbright** has started her new job with us as of July 12th. We would be remiss if we did not thank again all those who lifted our spirits, informed our minds, and moved our souls during this uncertain time both in our church and in our world. Thank you to the following--March 7 - **CJ Woods**, March 14 (pi day)- **Beth Gleason**, March 21 - **Sarah Bentley**, Holy Week March 28 - April 4 - **Whit Bodman**, April 11- **Ann Locasio**, April 18 - **Carolyn Thompson**, April 25 - **Cam Burton**, Chaplain, St. David's Hospital, May 2 - **Kyndra Frazier**, KYND Consulting, May 9 - **Angela Williams**, Texas Freedom Network, May 18 - **Mary Wilson**, Church of the Savior (ret.), May 23 (Pentecost) - **Amelia Fulbright**, May 30 - **Don Brewington**, Chaplain, Huston-Tillotson, June 6 - **Jade Evans**, Chaplain, Ascension Health, June 13 - **Heidi Carrington Heath**, Chaplain, Phillips Exeter Academy, June 20- **CJ Wood**, June 27 - **Megan Snell**, DMin candidate (and former member of the church), July 4 - **Whit Bodman**, July 11 - **CJ Wood**. If you missed a service or would like to see a service again, go to <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEI7fDxIaM59I6pfpPIORqg> and you can watch again.

The amazing 93-year-old **Ruth Koenig** writes, "I had hoped to learn to swim this summer. Even though I took a course at the Y once, it didn't "take." I have always loved the water and find it relaxing, but also had a fear of it. We have a nice pool here (at Brookdale) and I love exercising in it. It turns out that my dream of actually learning to swim this summer was neither practical nor attainable. Nevertheless, I can at least use the pool a couple of times a week for exercise, which is both healthful and enjoyable."

It is a sorrow to report that **Hudson (Bill) Phillips** passed away at home at the age of 87 on Wednesday, July 21, in the afternoon. **Betty** and **Bill** and family have had longtime ties to the church, going back to the ministry of **John Towery**. Plans are

being made for a memorial service to be held in the coming months and are thankful for outreach from the church. **Betty** shares with such gratefulness that their daughters, **Katy** and **Stephanie**, cared for him right up until the very end, bearing witness both to his suffering and to his persistent love in the face of death. **Stephanie** wrote the following to mark her father's passing, and she shares one of her dad's many poems (for which he was well-known), as well. "**Hudson** passed peacefully late yesterday afternoon. He was surrounded by love and music and family and flowers from the garden. His last months have been too hard on all of us and the end came so much faster than we could have imagined. He is now breath and color and light and water. The sunrise and the new life and so much love. We are so blessed to have been loved by him. So unconditionally and so well." There will be a service at a later date.

### The Old Man's Choice by Hudson Phillips

Take hold where care assists  
or rest in grasses that let down easy;  
at best a bed to life's unopened pull.  
Flowers picked  
to pink a ring around your grave,  
where you may sleep to hums of bees.  
Grab quick old man,  
my sweat in yours a guide  
through slough of memory purloined till now.  
Bring messages to every cell,  
the cost of living,  
each shared a step to firmer ground and daub of  
color"



7/1/12 Nancy Brown admiring Bill Phillips' newly published book

## Personals by Pat Oakes

There is even more sorrow to share. Long-time member and friend of the church, **Beth Placek**, 78, died on Monday, July 26th after an illness of more than a month. She was finally hospitalized on Sunday, July 11th, after a neighbor found her unresponsive in her car in her driveway on that Sunday afternoon. She apparently had a stroke and a heart attack and then developed a serious infection. She was faithfully visited by Seton chaplain and deacon **CJ Wood** and by our new pastor **Amelia Fulbright**. **Beth** also had long-time ties to the church going back to the early ministry of **John Towery** who served from 1959-1989. She worked for many years as a pharmacist and was a determined Democrat who worked on many political campaigns over the years. She never met a stranger. Everyone who knew **Beth** knew that she loved to dance—and dance she did, even coming back after nearly dying several years ago from sepsis, a month in the hospital, more than a year in a rehab setting, and having both knees replaced during that time. She was determined to keep on dancing. There will be a service at a later date.



4/21/19 Beth Placek and Chencho Flores were delighted to be at church on Easter Sunday



9/23/06 Beth Placek dancing for the talent show

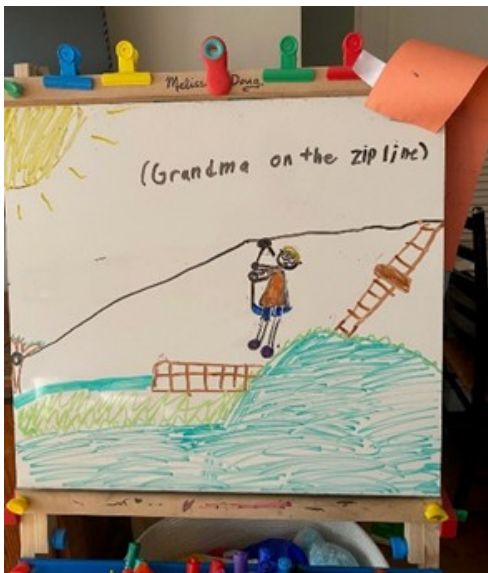


6/16/2021 Sarah Darter took this wonderful photo of Beth Placek in mid-June when she and Joy Penticuff went by for a visit

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

**Victoria Li's** eldest daughter **Jocelyn Tau** had a baby girl on July 11, 2021, weighing in at nine lbs. four oz! Her name is **Evelyn Shingming Tau**. **Jocelyn** (law partner at Akin Gump) and her husband **Andy Tau**, (GI Physician with the Austin GI Group) live in Austin, two blocks from **Bill and Victoria**. Big brother is **Lucas Tau** who is six years old. Lucky parents, lucky grandparents and lucky grandchildren to be so close together.

**Betty and Whit Bodman** have been on a road trip up through the East coast to visit **Whit's** sisters in NC and PA as well as some cousins in VA and, of course, daughter **Elizabeth** and her family in NJ. Besides seeing family not seen since COVID, highlights of the trip include a terrific view of fireworks on July 4th. Looking over the Hudson River from the NJ side, they could see fireworks on the East River over the top of the NYC skyline, a light show followed by fireworks from the top of the Empire state building AND fireworks from barges in the Hudson River. There's also been some blueberry picking, zip-line rides, a trip to the Museum of Natural History in NYC and creation of a "fairy house" for the granddaughters. They also note that twin grandsons **Arlo** and **Otis** in Whitefish, Montana, were born nearly two months early on 7/11 last year—and when they were born, the two of them (now thriving) didn't even weigh close to the nine pounds and four ounces that Victoria's new granddaughter weighed at birth!



7/21 Drawing by Whit and Betty's granddaughter Clara in New Jersey of her grandmother on the zip line

Many of us at the church provided donations to help **Cameron Goff** spend the summer after his junior year of high school in Ecuador volunteering with non-profit Amigos de las Americas. During college **Cameron** volunteered with Amigos again where he met fellow volunteer **Amber Corder** from Houston. They are now recently engaged! **Cameron** is currently starting his 3rd year of medical school at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, and **Amber** is in a graduate program for accounting at Rice University.



Cameron Goff popping the question to Amber Corder—she said yes!!!

*Lord help the mister who comes between me and my sister, and Lord help the sister who comes between me and my man.* This snippet of song is what **Joy** and **Gloria** and **Beth** and **Ann**—the four **Hinson** sisters—used to sing in their late teens while being courted by the parade of young gentlemen who would end up on the “reject” heap or continue down the aisle. Forty-some years later, the four sisters still embrace that sentiment, although sadly, **Gloria's** and **Ann's** husbands both died last year. So it was a very special treat for **Joy** to fly to Charlotte, NC, to join **Ann** in celebrating **Gloria's** birthday. Sister **Beth** was visiting grandchildren in Utah, so missed out on

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

on the reunion. **Joy** hadn't seen her sibs since before the pandemic. **Ann** had recently moved into a new home in a newly-built neighborhood and she and **Joy** had a delightful time at the July 4<sup>th</sup> community party. The picture shows **Ann** and **Joy** doing a little dancing. At dusk, they returned to **Ann's** house and watched from the pool while fireworks dazzled overhead. **Joy** noticed that a lot of ash was falling but wasn't worried about fire because of being in the pool. **Ann** and **Joy** took a day trip to Columbia, SC, to visit brother **Robert** and various nieces and nephews. **Joy's** six-day visit was wonderful.



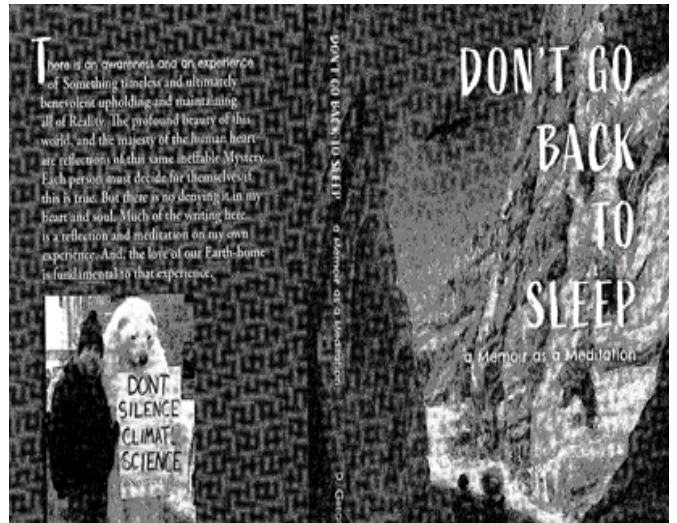
7/4/21 Joy Penticuff (r) and her sister Ann dancing up a storm at a community celebration in SC on the 4th

**Ann Locasio** wants to share some information for our Texas readers from the Hogg Foundation about the Texas mobile vaccination plan which allows those who are in need of COVID vaccinations to set up group appointments for five or more people at your location—a park, a house, a business or an apartment, etc.—and the vaccine and vaccinators will come to them. Check this link:

<https://www.texastribune.org/2021/05/26/texas-mobile-covid-19-vaccines/>

Marvelous massage therapist **Becky Nash** (daughter of **Liz** and **Reuel**) is starting a new job at Indigo Moon Massage on August 1st. They are centrally located at 604 W 35th St, Austin, TX 78705. They specialize in deep tissue massage. Here is the website <https://www.indigomoonmassage.com>.

**Greg Futch** reports, "Attached is the cover for my little book. I am so happy that it will likely be printed in August. It has two major themes: the spiritual journey (in general, but also mine in particular), and humanity's need to change our relationship with Mother Earth. Towards more sustainability, and less consumer culture!! It has been about 8 or 9 years in the making, and I am glad to have a narrative to pass on to friends, relatives, and descendants. It has chapters on my father, on music, on my seminary experience, and much material on the natural world and nature spirituality. I even have a dream of reading some of this book to folks in the Congregational Church of Austin sometime in the future! Time will tell, but that would be a joy for me."



Book cover for Greg Futch's new book

After more than a year of not traveling and staying very close to home all the time, this summer has really opened up for **Mel** and **Pat Oakes** (fully vaccinated, of course). **Mel** and **Pat** joined in a graduation celebration/reunion in Iowa City when grandson **Ethan** graduated from West High—with highest honors. He is headed for Stanford in September. **Beth**, **Sarah** and **Mardie** were there,

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

sons-in-law **Eugene Buck** and **Joe Pierce**. **Eugene's** sister **Liz** and their brother **Charles** and his wife **Sue's** 20-something kids—**Matt** and **Sarah**. It was such a wonderful time—visiting, eating wonderful food, and celebrating being together. Hanging over the event was the health of **Pat's** Aunt **Doris** (who lived in a nursing home 15 minutes away for the past 9 years) who was very much looking forward to turning 100 on June 17. She suffered a fall on May 29th, and while still cognizant, was not eating anymore and drinking very little. She was not expected to live when they went to Iowa, but she was still here when they got back home. **Pat** and **Mel** were visiting every day. **Pat's** sister **Nancy** came from Cortland, NY, for a week-long birthday celebration, but it was much more subdued than they had hoped. During the week **Nancy** was here, **Pat**, **Mel**, and **Nancy** were visiting the nursing home every day. Reminiscent of the movie “Ground Hog Day,” each day as they left, they said tearful goodbyes, the hospice folks telling them she would not make it—but she continued to live. Staff from the nursing home and the hospice folks were coming by to cheer her on. **Mardie** and 9-year-old grandson **Durham** drove in from San Francisco (**Durham** is terrified of flying) on the 16th and **Mardie** was able to wish her well on her big day. Aunt **Doris** was determined to make it to the 17th, and actually exceeded her goal by two days. She died early on the morning of the 19th. She donated her body to the UT Medical School in San Antonio. On the 20th, **Pat** and **Mel** with **Mardie** and **Durham** embarked on a five night – six day 1400 mile trip to Big Bend and the MacDonal Observatory, both places they had talked about going to see for years—and now they have done it! They had a great visit at the observatory with **John Kuehne** (who works there), a first cousin once removed of **Hildegard Kuehne Everett** who attended the church while at UT years ago. He was happy to send his greetings to **Sara Ross** who got **John**, a violist, to join the Austin Community Orchestra where he met his future wife **Deb**. Sadly, the star party they had hoped to attend was cancelled because of rain. In spite of that disappointment, **Mel** commented that it was the trip of a lifetime, but now at their advanced ages they would only need to access their short-term memories!



6/6/21 Eugene, Beth, Emily, Ethan, Sarah, Mardie, and Joe with Mel and Pat in Iowa City



6/22/21 Durham with grandparents Mel and Pat Oakes at the handicapped hiking trail in the Chisos Basin in Big Bend

**Lynn Chavarria** writes, "The July 2021 Women's Book Club selection is **The Vanishing Half** by **Brit Bennett** (one that I recommended). It is a story of identical twins who grew up in the south. My twin sister **Karen** and I also grew up in the south. But the story is more poignant because of memories of my twin that the novel provoked. **Karen** and I were born in 1943 in St. Petersburg, Florida, as very identical twins to older parents. The incidence of identical twins is much more prevalent in older parents, although my father had several identical girl twin cousins. We were told that our birth certificates are wrong as to who came first, although we were mixed up many times until my father discovered we were mirror twins, meaning one hair crown went one way and the other the other direction, among other physical distinctions. Sometimes this mirroring goes as far as misplaced organs

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## Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

in identical twins. I was left-handed and they switched me in school which I gleefully blame for all my problems in life. We were never separated until going off to college. We would not allow being separated in school until we were in high school. We had our own nonverbal language. We just knew all the time where the other one was and how they were. According to our perspective and that of our family neither one of us was dominant. We made identical scores on our state high school placement tests. We received lots of attention and were used in commercials - where you need a “before” and “after” when commercials were live. No, we did not trick boys on dates. We did that after we were married with my husband. Naughty story. My sister became a pharmacist, and I went through several careers to end up in commercial real estate finance. We each had two children with the older and younger ones being only six months apart. Our dream was to retire together, so I moved to North Carolina in 2013. We designed and built a “grandma” house - two downstairs master bedrooms and a big kitchen with a small but efficient raised garden. Some of our favorite foods -- tomatoes, okra, chard, and eggplant grow wonderfully well in North Carolina. My sister was the nutritionist and health advocate for the family. Her “allergies” got worse and worse soon before I moved to North Carolina. Sadly, the allergies were finally diagnosed as stage four lung cancer in 2016. This was an awful shock since she did not smoke and practiced clean living, eating from her large organic garden. None of the new genetic mutation specific therapies worked. She passed in 2017. I inherited her four grandchildren whom I love and spoil equally with my Austin granddaughter. Our children and the grandchildren are very close."



2014 Lynn Chavarria on the right and her twin sister Karen



About 1948 Lynn and Karen Chavarria—no one knows which one is which!

## History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

**A**s we head into a new phase of the history of the Congregational Church of Austin, it is also fun and informative to look back on where we've been. **Mel** recently found a video that celebrates the day we burned the mortgage at the church. We are not even sure who shot the video or if someone compiled footage from several cameras—no cell phones at that point!. A big celebration was held on Sunday, Sept. 16, 1990—almost 31 years ago. The first link is photographs from that day and the second link is of the video. It takes a while to go through the video, but for those of us who were part of the church at that time, you will see so many familiar faces and it will be worth the time. If you are new to the church, you will still find it fun to see if you can find the folks who were young then and are now part of the older set. Mel has added identifications to the video. If you can identify unidentified folks, please let **Mel** know ([oakes@physics.utexas.edu](mailto:oakes@physics.utexas.edu)).

### **Mel and Pat Oakes**

<https://www.patandmeloakes.com/PatandMelOakesFamilySite/CCAHistory/CCAGroup1990.html>

<https://www.patandmeloakes.com/PatandMelOakesFamilySite/CCAHistory/ChurchMortgageBurn1990%20Captioned.mp4>