

THINKING ABOUT CHRIST'S BUILDING

How many maps, in the descriptive or geographical sense, might be needed to deal exhaustively with a given space, to code and decode all its meanings and contents? It is doubtful whether a finite number can ever be given in answer to this sort of question...It is not only the codes—the map's legend, the conventional signs of map-making and map-reading—that are liable to change, but also the objects represented, the lens through which they are viewed, and the scale used...We are confronted not by one social space but by many—indeed, by an unlimited multiplicity or uncountable set of social spaces which we refer to generically as 'social space'...*Social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another.* They are not *things*, which have mutually limiting boundaries and which collide because of their contours or as a result of inertia...Visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity.

Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (emphasis in the original)

Holy cow! Now that gives you something to think about as you ponder the new handicap-accessible bathroom on the church's first floor, or the landscaping that will prevent water from seeping into the Appel Room.

I first read Lefebvre's book in school when I needed some theoretical weight for a report I was writing on the Guatemalan army's strategy of systematically destroying Mayan villages that had existed for generations and then forcing the survivors into model villages to exert greater control over them. According to Lefebvre, "space" exists not only in a geographical or material sense. People create "social spaces" through their daily practices and interactions. These spaces have meaning, significance, and value in people's minds and hearts. The social spaces people create are the worlds they inhabit. When Guatemalan soldiers burned a Mayan village to the ground, they did not simply burn a bunch of huts, they burned whole universes of meaning. The separate, overlapping, and shared social spaces—the worlds of social practice and meaning that Mayan men, women, and children inherited, created, and inhabited—were suddenly and tragically gone.

Using Lefebvre's analysis, we can better understand how our own church building is not simply a geographical location or a material structure, but a multiplicity of social spaces. Take the Appel Room for example. For people who have been church members for many years, the Appel Room is a space that is meaningful, significant, and valued in specific ways. Older members have a history of shared practices and memories that include potlucks, special events and celebrations, the work of renovation, the recollection of pre-renovation ministries like The Loft, and a love for a dear friend named Jean Appel. For these folks, The Appel Room is a particular social space, one that deserves a certain honor and respect. For newer church members, the Appel Room is a different space, one far less defined or significant. To the homeless youth who frequent the Lifeworks Drop-In Center or show up for Freeze Night Shelter, the room is a completely different space. It's not the Appel Room at all. It's their hang-out, or the place where someone cared for

them and saved their life, or the address where they can pick up their mail, grab a couple cans of food, and get their dog treated for fleas.

On Google Earth the Appel Room has one set of GPS coordinates, but within the hearts and minds of the different people who use that space, it exists in different universes. Within that one set of coordinates a multiplicity of social spaces co-exist, interpenetrate, and superimpose themselves on one another. They compete, resist, and live in harmony with one another.

The same goes for other parts of our building. The children see their playroom one way on Sunday while our custodian Victor sees it another way on Monday. We talk about the third floor as rental space and the “cave” as a funky hallway that connects the choir room to the Appel Room. Lifeworks staff turn these places into social spaces where the significant drama of their daily work life unfolds. What we call Fellowship Hall on Sunday is by Thursday the site of our Front Porch Ministry to those who serve and the free lunch spot to those who eat.

So, what’s the point? While many church members see the church building as *our* building, I see it as Christ’s building. We are the stewards of Christ’s building, the ones charged with using *his* building to further *his* mission and ministry in the world. We do this in large part by opening it up to others and sharing it with them. Those with whom we share it often do not see it, inhabit it, respect it, or honor it the way we do. It is for many of them a far different space than it is for us. They see it, inhabit it, respect it, and honor it in ways we will never know, but in ways that I hope are pleasing to Christ.

I believe our upcoming renovations will be pleasing to Christ and to all who benefit from them in the future. Hopefully, they will draw new people into our church, people who will come for many different reasons, people who will inherit, create, and inhabit many different spaces.

Tom

Chairs of our Boards

Trustees:	Reuel Nash
Deacons:	Betty Bodman
Christian Education:	Nancy Edison & Doyal Pinkard
Christian Outreach:	John Goff

OUTREACH ALERT

T-Shirt Sales

The response to the sale of the new Congregational Church of Austin t-shirts has been tremendous! As of May 14 we had sold over \$600 worth of shirts at \$10 each. All money from t-shirt sales (not just the profits) will go to Back Bay Mission as a supplement to our line item giving. The organic cotton shirts, manufactured by a women's sewing cooperative in Nicaragua, were purchased with profits from our sales of Free Trade coffee and cocoa. After May, we will continue to sell shirts once a month along with the Free Trade coffee during fellowship hour. We still have all sizes available, and if necessary we will silk

screen more. Everyone should be seen in this stylish and consciousness-raising attire!

Micah 6 is Growing! The Central Christian church has recently joined the Micah 6 group of University-area churches as a "supporting faith community," and Hyde Park Presbyterian is evidently very close to joining as well. The Micah 6 bylaws will need to be changed to allow new churches to be full voting members, and the Outreach Board has given its full support to that effort. This is a wonderful development that we believe will greatly increase the effectiveness of Micah 6 for meeting the needs of our community.

PERSONALS

by Pat Oakes

John Gage, son of **Les and Winnie Gage**, who was a seminary student in care of our church and was ordained by our UCC domination at a wonderful ceremony 6 years ago, will be installed in the fall as the senior pastor at United Church on the Green in New Haven, CT, directly across from Yale University where John attended undergraduate school. With the retirement of Rev. Louise Higginbotham, the search committee set out to find the perfect replacement--and realized that John was the one. In addition to his work at United Church, he is also doing work with the UCC Connecticut conference, some national UCC work--and is teaching part-time at Yale Divinity School. Congratulations, John. We are very proud of you!

It was good to see former long-time member **Terri Ocean** at the Heritage Society of Austin Homes Tour in May. She reports that she is doing well and so are her off-spring. Many of the old-timers at the church remember them as young children, but they are all grown up. Mark works in Austin at Mercury Insurance Company, David works at UT, Stephen is a cook in the Florida Keys, and Christine is a store manager in Los Angeles.

Mary Sinclair and Richard Jackson enjoyed four days together in southern California in April. They had dinner one evening with former pastor Yoshi and Setsuko Kaneda. The Kanedas' grandson Eric has a mop of hair and excels in soccer and cross country running. He is Yuri's son; her dental practice is doing well. They have two gorgeous granddaughters - Joe's kids - in Newport Beach. Richard has been making trips to Toronto and Ottawa to arrange their 're-immigration' to Canada later this year so that Richard can finish his career burying nuclear waste. Mary and Richard are very much looking forward to welcoming Mel and Pat Oakes to the Sinclair/Jackson "ranch" in Boulder for a short visit in June.

Paul and Ellen Deisler report on their recent twelve night cruise aboard the M/V Galaxy in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea as follows. The cruise was very good, very peaceful, very fattening, with only good weather. The ship, a floating city, had three swimming pools and the piña coladas were good (one trial mai tai was not so good). Paul and Ellen especially enjoyed a fine quartet of Polish women who provided excellent music, playing everything from Mozart to Scott Joplin. Ports of call were: Cozumel, Costa Maya (both in Mexico), Puerto

Limón (Costa Rica), Cristóbal (Panama), the Canal itself to Gatún Lake and back, Montego Bay (Jamaica), Georgetown (Grand Cayman) and return to Galveston -- and the first rain they had seen since departing. The evident wealth of Grand Cayman stood in stark contrast to the poverty elsewhere on the trip, especially Jamaica. They took interesting tours off-ship everywhere but in Panama, the trip up and down the Gatún locks being more than enough of a tour (the ship, 77,700 tons, had only 2 feet of clearance on each side in the locks). The last time Paul went through the Panama Canal was in 1941 and Ellen had not seen it before. Paul reports that the Panamanians seem to be doing a fine job of running and maintaining the Canal. Except for new donkey engines (now called mules) all was as in 1941 when the Canal was under U.S. management. The tours in Costa Rica (a trip by boat along the Tortuguero Canals, complete with howler monkeys and ten-foot crocodiles), the interior of Jamaica (to a plantation 2,000 feet above the sea, with a Jamaican lunch included), and to a current-day Mayan village in Yucatán and a very nice, very Mexican lake resort, both near Costa Maya, were the best and most interesting. Back home, while Paul and Ellen were gone, all kinds of terrible things happened in the world at large without their assistance. It's not a bad feeling, being irrelevant. It's also good to be back.

Don and Sharon Brown are celebrating the fact that on May 20 their older son became Dr. Gregory Eric Brown. He graduated from the UT Health Science Center in San Antonio and is heading to Albuquerque for three years' residency in internal medicine. Congratulations, Greg!

Lois and John Drachenberg are very good at springing surprises! They recently took a trip to Florida and came home by way of Missouri, timing their trip to coincide with the installation of Rev. Liz Spencer as pastor at Trinity UCC in Lexington, Missouri. That Sunday morning, John and Lois had pulled up across the street from the church when they saw Jean Decker, Liz's mom, pull up in her car. They got out and went to greet a very surprised Jean--and just as they met, Liz came down the steps of the church to greet her mother--and then saw the Drachenbergs! She was almost overcome with the surprise. Almost 100 people attended the event Liz sent an e-mail picture to show that it really did happen. While in Florida the Drachenbergs visited John's daughter in Apopka, near Orlando, and old friends in Miami and Lakeland, including a 100 year old friend who still bowls! They were gone 2 1/2 weeks and covered 4100 miles--fabulous!

Rizer Everett will be 90 on June 9th, but that doesn't slow him down one bit. He has finished another year of L.A.M.P. courses and is planning a wonderful birthday party at Green Pastures. A variety of doctors' appointments have all yielded good results. He and his friend Doris Tyler enjoyed lunch at Shady Grove Barbecue after a recent appointment. He visited another friend, Ellen Carter, who lives across the street from the recently renovated Pease Mansion and also enjoyed a lunch at the home of longtime friends, the Householders. Two days after the big storm in Austin on May 4th, Rizer visited his friend Doris at her home where she had lost both phone and electrical service and had many branches down. Rizer reports that he can see from his home at Englewood

Estates, that Williamson Creek, as of mid-May, had running water in it again after being dry for some time.

Not everyone can have a dream and make it come true, but **Vic Appel** has done just that. Some 25 years ago, when he and his late wife Jean were at a meeting in Kansas, they learned about the possibility of installing a waterfall in one's yard. Vic decided that was something he wanted to do--and now it is a reality. Vic was so pleased with how lovely it is that he had a dedication party for the waterfall and his new deck on May 13. Pastor Tom wrote a wonderful dedication service and 35 of Vic's friends came over for the festive outdoor service, followed by a barbecue supper. A good time was had by all. It was also an opportunity to congratulate Florence Castle on her 90th birthday which was that same day.

On Mother's Day, **Florence Castle** was further celebrated for her birthday, Nodie Murphy gave a wonderful children's sermon, playing off of the idea of the treasures one can find in a Castle and providing a huge card for the children to sign while the congregation counted aloud from 1 to 90. Birthday cake followed during coffee hour and a rousing "Happy Birthday" was sung. The men of the church provided the rest of the feast for Mother's Day.

Birthday congratulations were also extended to new member **Cora Gordon** who turned 93 on May 16, the same day that **Mary Charles Williams** turned 86.

George Carruthers and Marilyn Gaddis drove to Tyler, TX to attend George's 65th high school reunion celebration from April 30th to May 1st. Out of a class of 200 or so, 75 came to celebrate! During the reunion, George was interviewed and video taped for the Tyler Junior College Smithsonian World War II History Project. Marilyn then flew to Madison, WI, for her semi-annual UW-Madison School of Education Board of Visitors' meeting. Before returning home, she spent four days assisting a long-time friend who had just been diagnosed with cancer.

Steven and Jeanine Neuse are busy as all are this time of year. They were in Texas in April and had a chance to visit with John and Eleanor Towery. They met Steven's brother, Jon, and his family from Minneapolis to visit with a cousin of theirs who lives in Austin and has a ranch in the Hill Country. Both Steven and Jeanine are active in the League of Women Voters in Fayetteville, Arkansas (Jeanine does Finance and Steven is Voter Service Chair). Steven's background in Spanish has served him well as he has been distributing pamphlets in English and Spanish. In June they are going to Minneapolis to represent the local League of Women Voters, Washington County, at the National Convention. Another chance to visit relatives!

Bill and Betty Phillips have been having adventures in sleeping! Bill underwent testing for sleep apnea and found that he has a severe case of same. He describes himself during the test, "I was wired from head to toe. Think of it as a full body EEG that would last eight hours. My left forefinger lit up like ET, when the juice was plugged in. Various masks were cupped around my mouth and nose with air generated through a tube and pump, giving me a Christopher Reeves look." He is learning to cope with a sleep mask and machine at night,

since this problem can be serious. Betty finally convinced Bill that the testing needed to be done--and she was right.

Congratulations to **Mardie Oakes** who was selected as one of 20 finalists (out of 756 applicants) for the Echoing Green Fellowships. Echoing Green is an organization focusing on strategies for positive social change which grants fellowships to projects which are working to better serious societal problems. Mardie's project is bringing together business and design sectors to provide housing for people in the San Francisco Bay area who have been living with mental illness or developmental disabilities and who are being forced to find housing as California is closing the institutions. She was involved in a weekend-long interview process in New York City (husband Tony got to come along)--and results should be known in a month or so. Ten to twelve of the finalists will be awarded \$30,000/year for two years toward their project. Coincidentally, sister Beth and the Maia Quartet (based at the University of Iowa in Iowa City) were also in New York performing that weekend in early May, so they were able to get together for brunch.

The **women's book club** had a lively discussion of Luis Alberto Urrea's book, THE DEVIL'S HIGHWAY at their May meeting. It coincided with President Bush's speech on illegal immigration. The book tells the story of a group of 26 men who tried to cross illegally into Arizona from Mexico via the daunting desert, resulting in the deaths of 14 of the men. Mayor Wynn of Austin has recommended that everyone in Austin read the book. Tommie Pinkard hosted the meeting and Sara Ross, Cathy Hubbs, Robin Chapman, Nancy Edison, Liz Nash, Pat Oakes, and Carol Barrett were in attendance. The next meeting will be Monday, June 26, at the home of Nancy Edison. The book will be THE HUMMINGBIRD'S DAUGHTER, also by Urrea.

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

- 2 Ches Towery
- 4 Stephanie Phillips
- 6 Debbie Appel-Knowlton
- 8 Katy Phillips
Maggie Towery
- 9 Rizer Everett
Tania String
- 11 Cheryl Appel
Jonathan Briggs
- 14 Whitney Barrett
- 16 Nodie Murphy
- 17 Karl Putz
- 20 Emily Howicz
- 21 David Ashton
- 22 Dennis Tingle
- 26 Garry Cole
- 27 Marilyn Gaddis

28 Pat Oakes
Vic Appel
30 Eric Mubiriki

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.

SUMMER MUSIC SIGN UP

Nodie Murphy, our music coordinator, has already received several offers of worship gifts to the congregation for the summer months.

Last year we had some liturgical dance, quartet singing, original music (both classical and jazz), specially selected music featuring our trio members, a tapestry presentation, an old-fashioned hymn-sing--a wonderful variety of gifts which enriched our worship experience all summer. We welcome all sorts of offers--dramatic readings, skits, poetry, other arts as well as musical ones. So search your treasure chest, and if you have something you wish to share with the congregation, let Nodie know at church, call her at 255-4602 or e-mail her at nodie@austin.rr.com. What's that you're hiding behind your back? Is it something for US?

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

George C. Hetrick
11203 FM 2222, # 505
Austin, TX 78730-1015

Cora B C Gordon
115 Heritage Dr
Austin, TX 78737-2602

Tiina S Tapia
1194 Ridge Dr
Austin, TX 78721-1036

FROM THE DEACONS

We welcomed three new members to our congregation last month.

George Hetrick, otherwise known as “the ordinary guy”, has moved to Austin within the past year. He’s an avid bicyclist and can give you the low-down on the best routes for getting to work on your bicycle. We’re sure he brings some extra-ordinary gifts to our community.

Cora Gordan came to Austin to be with her nephew Joe McMillan. She has led an amazing life and if you haven’t already had the chance, please visit with her during coffee hour and get her to tell you the places she’s been and the things she has seen and done. She may even tell you where she gets her beautiful hats.

Tiina Tapia and her daughter **Ilse** have been worshipping with us for some time. The Sunday they became members, Tiina’s parents and Tiina’s sister and her family were worshipping with us as well.

We hope you had a chance to extend your personal welcome to these new members.

The current focus for the deacons involves membership concerns. A new visitor information card should be making its way into the pews sometime (relatively) soon. If anyone feels their talents lead them to become part of our Welcoming mission, please mention that to any of the deacons.

So who are those delightful deacons now, you may ask? I’ll be glad to tell you: (in alphabetical order by first names): Barbara Burnham, Ben White, Betty Bodman, Dennis Murphy, Jim Howicz and Steve Domingue

Deadline for JULY-AUGUST VISITOR — JUNE 16