

# THE VISITOR

June 2020

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

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What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore—  
and then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over—  
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

—Langston Hughes

**I**t's exploding now.  
We're witnessing the volcanic eruption of human emotions bursting out, exploding through the surface from deep within, from the fiery core, the soul. Frustration, anger, grief, and resentment, pent up for entire lifetimes, for generations, for centuries, are erupting yet again.

A white knee pressing down on a black neck—what an image, the very image of domination. For entire lifetimes, for generations, for centuries, the collective weight of white knees have pressed down on black necks—choking, dominating, killing.

Watching events unfold over the past two weeks, two things struck me deeply, provoking my own eruption of emotion.

One was Donald Trump's repeated use of the words "dominate" and "domination" in his call to the governors on June 1, followed by his public spectacle of dominance at St. John's church. On the call, Trump chastised the governors for not dominating the protestors, then said of domination, "it's a beautiful thing to watch. It just can't be any better."

Several hours later, he abused the power our nation entrusts in his hands by deploying it violently to disperse peaceful protesters. Then he strode victoriously down the street he just emptied with chemicals and clubs to a church where he triumphantly waved The Bible in front of a camera. The whole act was a public exhibition of his personal dominance over his adversaries. For Donald Trump, displays of dominance this good "just can't be any better."

The irony of Donald Trump exploiting The Bible in the climax of his stage-play of dominance struck me with overwhelming force. Here was the Dominator-In-Chief, holding aloft the sacred text that contains some of humanity's most profound critiques of domination and dominators, the sacred text that tells the stories of generations of people—our spiritual ancestors—who for centuries resisted those who dominate,

struggled for liberation from them, and longed for a sacred realm free of domination. What an image—the dominator seeking to legitimize his dominance by clutching a text that advocates pulling him off his throne. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry, so I did both.

The other thing that struck me deeply was the series of photos and videos I sent out this past week. Many include police officers, white and black, taking a knee as protestors march past their stations. One photo shows white officers holding up a sign that says, END POLICE BRUTALITY. But the one that really got me was the video of an interaction between a white police officer and a younger black protester. When the protester begins openly sobbing, the officer gently places his hand around the protesters neck and embraces him with a hug in what appears to be a genuine and spontaneous act of empathy and compassion.

Seeing that, my heart instantly cracked open, and I was overwhelmed by the feeling that I was witnessing a sacred act. For me, that was a beautiful thing to watch. It just couldn't get any better. It was the Biblical vision of human kinship and peace becoming incarnate right before my eyes. It restored my hope that the dream, though long deferred and still deferred, is actually realizable. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry, so I did both.

**TOM**

## **July - August Visitor Deadline July 27, 2020**

### **Church Leadership**

Deacons Chair	Faye Dierksen
Outreach Team	Whit Bodman
Moderator	Joy Penticuff
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Dennis Murphy
Christian Education Coordinators	Jaime Hadley
Youth Sunday School	Amy Kent Rivera
Clerk	Reuel Nash
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Webmaster	Mel Oakes
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

## Heart of Texas Association News June

by Liz Nash

**W**e held our first all online Heart of Texas Association meeting on Saturday, May 16th. It was, of course, with regret that we had to change to this format instead of gathering at Weimar UCC. However, we rejoice that we had 51 attendees representing 17 churches. While we have had more people attend an Association meeting, we had the highest number of churches ever represented, and we voted with joy to welcome Friedens United in Gay Hill back into our Association. Each church gave a short report about their life and activities, which is always a vital and great part of our meeting. I appreciate your efforts to join together at this time to continue our reach across churches for ministry in Christ's name. We have all learned a great deal very quickly about being the church in cyberspace during the pandemic.

At our spring meeting, we had Ecclesiastical Councils for **Kerry Kirtley** and **Arlene Turner**, approving both for ordination. **Kerry** and **Arlene** have both come to the UCC from the United Methodist Church. **Kerry** was welcomed to the UCC by Bethany Congregational in San Antonio. She is a pastor, along with **Billie Watts**, of the vibrant new congregation Touchstone Community Church, in Boerne. **Arlene** was welcomed to the UCC by United Christian Church, where she has had many opportunities to serve in ministry during the church's interim period. We look forward to **Kerry's** ordination to her call at Touchstone when that can happen, and we offer our encouragement and support to **Arlene** as she starts her search for a call to ministry.

At our meeting, we also extended a call until Labor Day to gather supplies for Back Bay Mission hygiene kits or to send in donations to our Association to allow us to buy supplies in bulk for these kits. In early September, we will find a way to pick up any kits our churches have assembled, to buy the supplies most needed using monetary donations, and to transport these out to Biloxi to Back Bay Mission for the homeless folks they serve. If you have kits to be picked up, contact **Liz Nash** at [lizknash@gmail.com](mailto:lizknash@gmail.com) or **Linda Coats** at [linda\\_coats@msn.com](mailto:linda_coats@msn.com). If you wish to donate money, send it to our Association

treasurer, **Joe Ward**, with an indication that the gift is for Back Bay hygiene kits. To find out the supply list for the kits and where to send money, go to our website at <http://hotaucc.org/index.html> and click on "Report on the Spring Meeting" and "Back Bay Mission Hygiene Kit Info." You will also see **Glen Schoeneberg's** extra verse for the song "Pass It On" that he and **Dottie** sang for us during worship, a gentle and fun reminder about how to pass on God's love in this pandemic.

Finally, I want to share a word of caution with you. I recently have encountered several "phishing" attempts via email and text -- many more than usual. As you may know, "phishing" refers to attempts to commit fraud by impersonating a friend, company, or organization in order to obtain personal information such as your credit card number or to get you to send money or gift cards. These attempts have mainly come as emails or texts that look like legitimate contacts from our pastors, often with church information on them. Others ask you to click on a link. If you receive a message that appears to be from a minister but you aren't absolutely sure, check the email address or phone number, and also check in a different way with the person who appears to have sent it. Do not click on a link and do not send gift cards, money, etc. if those are requested. Many people are working for the good of all during this time but, sadly, some are not.

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

**Personals**  
by Pat Oakes

**C**arol and **John Burlinson** are delighted to be first-time grandparents. Their son **Jake** and his wife **Jackie** are the parents of **John Min** (one of Jake's Korean names meaning "precious stone") **Burlinson** who was born on May 4, 2020, at 1:30 p.m., weighing seven pounds, zero ounces, and 20.5 inches long. Because of the quarantine, **John** and **Carol** were not able to meet baby **John** for two weeks. **Carol** is delighted to report that he was very calm and only woke up to feed and then went right back to sleep. He is, of course, adorable! Young **John** has lots of folks to love him including his four half-siblings who spend every other weekend with **Jake** and **Jackie**.



4/18/20 Happy Grandparents John and Carol Burlinson with 2-week-old John Min Burlinson



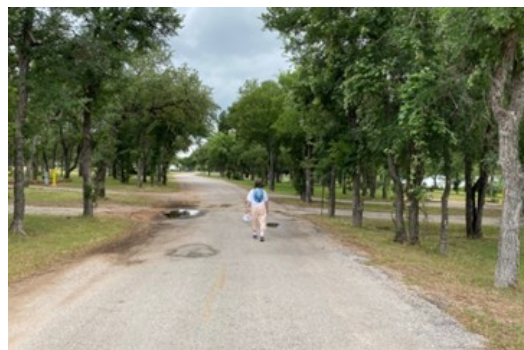
5/21/20 Carol could not resist sending this photo which was taken a few days after they met young John—his first smile!!

Pastor **Tom Vandestadt** took a quick trip to **New Mexico** recently to disappear into the mountains for a few days. He stayed just north of Taos at a small organic farm that offers lodging (with very strict safety protocols) and got in a few good hikes with lots of stream crossings, though he didn't make it to any peaks because of the deep snow in the higher altitudes. He was dismayed to see the lack of physical distancing and mask-wearing in the small cities and towns he drove through along the way, and felt grateful for the precautions many in Austin are still taking.

**Dave** and **Sara Ross** also note that it raises the spirits to get outside and see some different scenery. On a recent Wednesday, they made a day trip to Inks Lake State Park. The morning was cool, and they had a refreshing walk through the woods to "Devil's Waterhole."



5/20 A selfie of Dave and Sara Ross at the "The Devil's Waterhole—the park was almost unoccupied.



Sara taking a solitary walk in Inks Lake State Park. Dave notes, "This may change as the park opens for camping, but for now it was good for us."

## Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes

**Fran** and **Rambie Briggs** don't find stay-at-home restrictions too onerous, surrounded as they are by lots of green and blue as they live on the shores of Lake Travis. (Rambie says "Thanks, Tom, for pointing out how spiritually satisfying that is.") Taking walks, gardening, and two boat trips on the lake with grandchildren **Giovanni** and **Stella** have been occupying their time. Their second trip was enlivened by high winds and white caps. They escaped the wind by motoring up Bee Creek. It reminded them of crossing Mobile Bay, which is often rough.

**Don** and **Sharon Brown** are doing fine at their home in central Austin. They have had one misadventure though. When they moved into their home many years ago, they brought with them their home freezer when they moved to Austin from **California**. This was its 44th year and it decided that was the perfect time to quit. **Don** and **Sharon** didn't discover the malfunction for a day or two. It was well-stocked and they lost a lot of food. They immediately started looking and could not find a replacement on line. Because of the pandemic, people were buying lots of freezers. Fortunately Sharon finally remembered the name of an independent appliance repairman who works in their area and who made their day and came to fix it. He was able to do so—and the whole charge was \$190.00. What a relief! In more mundane ways, they have enjoyed working on projects around the house. Their grandchildren, who live next-door, come to the fence, peer over it, and **Sharon** reads to them—keeping social distance, of course—and reads to them from their screen porch. They are looking forward to celebrating their 54th wedding anniversary on June 5th.

**Jo Jensen**, who has been staying busy continuing her guitar lessons on line during the pandemic, notes that it is not as much fun as in-person lessons. She and husband **Bob** are both busy, however, with a new member of the family. She writes, "**Winston Churchill** is credited with the quip, 'If you're going through hell, keep going.' Whether or not **Churchill** actually spoke the exact words doesn't matter. I love the quote and use it often these days. Two days prior to my birthday in January, our next-door neighbor, **Nik**, walked into our front yard carrying a cute puppy (approximately three months old,

according to the vet). **Nik** had found him on the service road of 290E, scrounging for food. Attempts to locate an owner for a puppy that was way too cute to dump alongside of the road failed. The vet scanned him for a microchip...none. No response to ads in the Nextdoor App. No response to any ad. **Nik** kept him for three days until I inquired about how 'the puppy' was doing. They brought him over for us to 'play' with and the rest is history. **Bob** and I were instantly smitten. By the end of the day, **Bob** was off to **PetsMart** to purchase a wire crate. I felt certain this adorable puppy would behave in a way that caused us to decide against keeping him. The cute puppy slept through the night, did his business outside, and magically weaved his way into our hearts. Within a few days, we were calling him "**Winston**." If someone dumped him on the road, he had been through more than enough hell for such a young pup. **Winston** would be his name. He weighed 23 pounds back in January and he weighed 48 pounds at the vet's office last week. **Winston** has **Bob** and me moving around more these days. His energy is contagious...well, sort of, and he learns commands quickly. **Bob** and I had discussed rescuing a dog (we already rescued a cat a few years ago) but had always talked ourselves out of it. Until now. **Winston** accompanied us to southern **New Mexico** in February and was great company in the camper van. He makes the loss of our bees a tad easier to cope with, too. That's a whole 'nother story. I guess we'll keep him...forever!" **Jo** is still too heartsick to share their bee story, but promises to do so at another time.



5/20 Jo Jensen and Bob Garret are the happy new owners of one lucky dog—Winston!

## Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes

**Don Miles** shares news from his daughter, **Juliette**. Her husband, **Marlin Ritzman**, a retired Assistant Director for the FBI, has just accepted a job at the Pentagon. (No details yet on his job title or when he starts.) He and **Juliette** started in the army together as second lieutenants back in 1986. Each had served as student commandant for a semester in the ROTC at the University of **Nebraska**. Their first assignment was in **Hawaii** where he led an Infantry unit while she carried his troops into mountain areas as officer of a helicopter unit. **Juliette** is still flying helicopters 34 years later in Kuwait. The couple's two sons, **Austin** and **Garrett**, are on active duty as army officers. **Don's** son **Richard** tells him that his grandson, **Christian Miles**, has also just accepted a job at the Pentagon. **Christian** has been serving as a radio technician aboard a submarine based in Guam. **Don** will update us further as more details become known.

**Gail Christeson**, Associate Director of the Institute for Geophysics and a Senior Research Scientist in the Department of Geological Sciences has been awarded the Knebel Teaching Award for graduate teaching for her class “Python in Geoscience Research” which considers fundamental and scientific python (a programming language) with a focus on geoscience applications. Her department reports that her class has quickly become one of the most popular offerings in their upper level undergraduate-graduate student program. **Gail** feels very moved by the award as upper-level undergraduate and graduate course awards are voted on by the students. Congratulations, **Gail!**

**Dennis** and **Nodie Murphy** are worried about their daughter-in-law **Faye**, married to their son **Ned**, who is a critical care nurse in the Minneapolis area. The major hospital in Minneapolis is suddenly at full capacity with increasing COVID 19 cases and is sending patients to the smaller hospitals in the area—and **Faye** works in one of those. **Ned** has finished his classes for the summer and is now a full-time at-home dad taking care of the two children. His plans for working on a summer grant studying rare pediatric cancers have been put on hold because of the pandemic. Keep **Faye** in your prayers.

**Joy Penticuff** reports on her beautiful horse **Armani**, “Here’s **Mani** these days. I’m not back to

riding yet, so I spend time with my horse by exercising him in the round pen, grooming him, and giving him carrots. The other photo shows my mask. There are very few people on the barn property these days and no lessons are being done. No one comes within 15 feet and I’m outside my whole visit. But it’s so wonderful to be able to get out to the barn and spend time with **Mani!** It’s very restorative for me. I hope everybody will be able to do restorative things soon.” **Joy** also was busy in her capacity as a member of the Strategy Team of Central Texas Interfaith. They’re now using the new name—Central Texas Interfaith—instead of the old Austin Interfaith because of the expansion into 10 central Texas counties. They held a press conference asking that the City of Austin help out low income renters. She represented us very well at the meeting.



5/20 Delighted Armani (aka Mani) with Joy Penticuff at the barn



5/20 Beautifully groomed Mani taking a break from exercising in the round pen

**Personals (cont)**  
by Pat Oakes



5/13/20 Joy Penticuff making a presentation at a Central Texas Interfaith Zoom press conference advocating for City of Austin help in assisting out-of-work renters make their payments



5/22/20 Bill Campbell and Victoria Li with daughter Dr. Lillian Hsu and wonderful balloon sculpture!

**Victoria Li** and **Bill Campbell's** youngest child **Lillian Hsu** graduated from Texas Tech Medical School on Friday 5/22/20. Family and friends organized a front yard party complete with a balloon sculpture to celebrate her achievement!!! June **Lillian** will begin her residency at the Medical University of **South Carolina** in Charleston. Her residency is in General Surgery.



5/22/20 Dr. Lillian Hsu with her best friend at her graduation parade

**Ches Towery** is pleased to announce that his and **Maggie's** daughter **Krystal** is engaged to **Cole McMahan** (some of us met him at the Christmas carol/candlelight service in December). The date is April 24, 2021, at Reunion Ranch out in the country 14 miles from Georgetown. **Krystal** and their daughter-in-law **Kendra**, both teachers, had a hard time with adjusting to remote emergency on-line teaching. The main problem was getting all the students to respond. **Ches** and **Maggie** were celebrating on Sunday, the 24th, a good day for the family, as son **KC** & wife **Kendra** brought their young children **Ben** and **Elizabeth** over to swim. It was the first time they had been with them since March 15th. **Krystal** & **Cole** joined them which made it even better.

**Dennis Schneider** reports from Tokyo that he is fine so far, just getting a little tired of his own cooking. He goes out for groceries maybe once in two weeks, and sometimes he has to go to the bank or post office to pay bills, etc. Fortunately he enjoys reading, and his Kindle is getting a workout. Unfortunately he says he spends too much time on Facebook, etc., which probably makes his mood worse instead of better. Gasoline prices are down, but since he doesn't go out much, he doesn't have room in the tank for more gasoline. He does see his daughter **Takako** and

**Personals (cont)**  
by Pat Oakes

grandson **Kade** and also his sister on Messenger (like Skype) now and then, and they seem busy and more or less happy. **Takako** is teaching her kindergarten class from home plus home schooling **Kade** who is in third grade, so she is fairly busy. His church, Tokyo Union Church, has been streaming Sunday services for quite a while now with just the pastor, organist and maybe half a dozen choir members and a few people to take care of the technical stuff on site. Otherwise the doors are locked and especially senior citizens (which now includes **Dennis**) are told to stay home. They've also had several different sorts of Zoom meetings; including one congregational meeting where they voted by show of hands on Zoom. It looks as if Japan is mostly going to taper off the shut-down by the end of May, which is both welcome and frightening news as they realize that the virus is not going to be gone by then and when they venture out, a lot of them are going to catch it, being that there's

no vaccine or cure in place. **Dennis** guesses the smart thing is to self isolate much longer. **Dennis** says, "Well, we live in interesting times!"

Your intrepid—and hasty—reporter was sending an e-mail to good friend **Ann Kimber** in Bristol, England, and inadvertently sent the e-mail to **Anna Kimberley**, our former Sunday school teacher, who was pleased to hear from me after I immediately wrote and apologized for my error. "What a small world. I can't believe you know someone named **Ann Kimber**. I am doing well! I'm in Los Angeles and I'm an occupational therapist for a private family here and loving it. I miss **Texas** but I'm glad to try something new! I love keeping up with some of the church members on Facebook. I hope you are all doing well! I live right around the corner from a Congregational church and I'm going to visit it when churches open back up. I'll come visit the next time I'm in Austin! Sending love and light your way."



5/24/20 Zoom coffee hour after on-line church--Dave and Sara Ross, Pat Oakes, Joy Penticuff, Faye and Andy Dierksen, CJ Wood, the Bodmans, Kay Pruet, Jaime Hadley (away momentarily), Carolyn Thompson, Bill Beardall, Nodie Murphy, Bill Campbell and Victoria Li, Reuel Nash (he and Liz were in their new camper--Liz was driving), Barbara Burnham, Carol Burlinson, Ann Locasio, René Slataper, Ruth Koeing, Lynne Lemley, and Jo Jensen. Tom came later and Jaana Rehbein was on briefly from Germany and Ellie Nash was on for a few minutes from Montreal until it was time for VIVI's nap

## Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes

**Brent Malkus** helped with the IDs on a picture taken at church years ago and wrote back, "My, but the sands of the hour glass do fall—although more slowly when you're locked down. I'm doing okay, albeit bored with cabin fever and my muscles are atrophying. I live alone in a travel trailer, as I'm highly sensitive to mold which is present in most buildings. Still on intense protocol for the Lyme and mold toxicosis. Give my best to the gang back in Austin." Because of his illnesses, he has had to stop his music career as a member of the Texas Sapphires which has been a difficult adjustment.



3/27/06 Brent Malkus, formerly of the Texas Sapphires, on a visit to church 14 years ago

**Mel** and **Pat Oakes** are doing fine hunkering down at home. **Mel** does the shopping, they walk in the neighborhood several mornings a week, and **Mel** is back to playing tennis several times a week (when it is not raining). **Pat** is having a wonderful time catching up on organizing, labeling, editing, and sharing photos from her extensive collection of photos on her computer. They are feeling somewhat downcast, though, as they decided in a family Zoom meeting with **Beth**, **Sarah**, and **Mardie** on Memorial Day, that their much anticipated reunion with their daughters and families in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, in August just was not the safe thing to do right now. They are

hoping that they will be able to reschedule it in the not too distant future. So many folks are having to do the same thing—cancel plans for so many special occasions. We all understand that this, too, shall pass and the world will go on.

Working from home is nothing new for **Warinda Harris** as she has been doing so since Jan.1. She is working all day six days a week which is challenging at times. It became even more so when the quarantine happened. Sons **Alden** and **William** were home from school and husband **John** was also working from home—and the outside helper who came in daily to help **Warinda's** mom **Barbara** was no longer able to come. **Alden** and **William** were finishing up a successful school year and are struggling with boredom as they can't be with and see their friends. They do go on long walks in their neighborhood and everyone, **Barbara** included, enjoys sitting out in the backyard on pleasant evenings. The extended family in Louisiana (whom many of us have met) so far is doing well. **Warinda** is set to go back to working from her office in July and **John** hopes to be back in his graduate studies program soon, too. A lot depends on whether **Barbara's** helper will be able to come back soon, too.

**Jonathan Geer** and **Roberto Hernandez** know this is a terrible time for so many, but they are treasuring every moment with their darling daughter as the 3 of them quarantine!!



5/20/20 Precious 4-month-old Xitali Hernandez-Geer is growing by leaps and bounds!!

more photos on next page

**Personals (cont)**  
by Pat Oakes



5/20/20 Precious 4-month-old Xitlali Hernandez-Geer is growing by leaps and bounds!!



5/20/20 Precious 4-month-old Xitlali Hernandez-Geer is growing by leaps and bounds!!

## History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

The Men's Book Club started in 1992 and consisted of men from the Congregational Church of Austin, United Church of Christ at 408 23rd Street, near the University of Texas. Meetings, held at 7:30 pm on the third Wednesday of each month, were hosted by members of the club. As the years passed, members would invite non-church friends to attend and often they would become permanent members. They have added a rich diversity of interests and backgrounds to the mix. **Rambie Briggs**, **David Ross**, and **Dennis Murphy** are charter members. Since 1992 the club has read over 250 books. The corona virus has forced meeting via Zoom temporarily. Failing eyesight on the part of a number of older members has caused them to change their meeting time to 10:00 AM.



Men's Bookclub Members, November 2017, Home of Mel and Pat Oakes--Left to Right: Seated: Rambie Briggs, Roger Bengtson, Mel Oakes, Second Row: Michael Rotman, Dennis Murphy, Gordon Huth, Al Lindsey, Bill Briggs, Loren Stell, Back Row: Saj Maqsood, Jim Keeler, Michael Hall, Don Brown, Sam Sutherland, Carl Hehmsoth



Missing Regulars: Dave Ross and Jim Vick