

June 2021

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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CHRIST-DRIVEN CONNECTION

Striving to imitate the life of Christ, the transformative United Church of Christ will encourage authentic connection and compassion between individuals, local communities, and the world using creative, agile technologies and partnerships.

GOD-CENTERED ACTION

The United Church of Christ will be committed to building deep partnerships in community that produce collective social action. We will boldly and actively endeavor to bring justice for all. We will be invitational as well as self-reflective, engaging the internal work of welcoming radical difference and truth-telling against systems of oppression that have held God's beloved people captive.

SPIRIT-LED LEADERSHIP

The transformative United Church of Christ will be an innovative, nimble, and credible source of institutional support, moving with Spirit and intention, able to vision courageously and respond swiftly to/for the communities and world in which we live for the sake of the gospel.

July Visitor Deadline June 25, 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

June

by Liz Nash

I share with joy that **Arlene Turner** has been called to be Pastor of Bethany Congregational UCC in San Antonio, beginning on June 1st. **Arlene** will be ordained at United Christian Church on Sunday, May 30th (by the time most of you read this article) during the Zoom prayer and fellowship time after preaching in the morning online worship service. As some of you may recall, **Arlene** was approved for ordination at an Ecclesiastical Council of the Heart of Texas Association last May. Her journey to ordination came first through the United Methodist Church, and then through being a Member in Discernment at United while helping in many ways with her active membership and ministry there. Bethany voted to call her on May 9th. Since **Arlene** is to be ordained at United, the church is working with her to celebrate her ordination before she begins at Bethany. They are figuring out how to do it with Association representation while the whole church community is still meeting online. Our ways are a bit different than before the pandemic, but we are thankful to God that our ministry continues. We pray for God's blessings on **Arlene** and on Bethany as they go forward in Christ's ministry together, and we give thanks for the caring and faithful interim ministry of Pastor **Tom Robison** with the church.

As announced earlier, **Kerry Kirtley** was ordained on Sunday, May 23rd at Touchstone Community Church in Boerne in a vibrant Pentecost service. The service was the first in person worship for Touchstone since March, 2020. It was also their first hybrid service, meaning that the service included those attending online. In addition, the service included both online and live music. It all came together beautifully. **Kerry**, like **Arlene**, came to the UCC through the United Methodist Church (UMC), and the service included UMC pastors who had supported her in her journey as well as many from her large and loving family.

Our brother in Christ, **Martin Garrison**, has resigned as Pastor of St Peter's Church of Coupland, with his last Sunday being June 27th. **Martin** has served at St. Peter's since 2014. Several of our Heart of Texas ministers shared heartfelt memories together recently as we said farewell to **Martin** at our May

"Jam and Bread" gathering. He and his wife, **Emily**, will be moving to Galveston for the next stop on their journey, with **Martin** taking a break from ministry. Our prayers for God's blessings and the presence of the Holy Spirit go with them. Our prayers go, too, with St. Peter's as they search for an interim minister and begin this time of transition.

Our brother in Christ, **Sid Hall**, will have his farewell worship service at Trinity Church of Austin on June 13th as he retires as their Lead Minister. **Sid** has served at Trinity since 1988, guiding them to become one of the early Reconciling Churches in the United Methodist Church and ministering with them as they became dually affiliated with the UCC, among many milestones in his ministry with the church. He has, as well, been a long time leader in social justice ministry in Austin. **Sid** and his wife, **Mary Pratt**, will be moving to Ft. Collins, Colorado, and he will move into full standing as a UCC minister in July. We give thanks to God for **Sid's** ministry and pray for **Sid** and **Mary** to be blessed with God's presence going forward. We also pray for God's blessings on Trinity's incoming interim minister, **Christine Tata** and on the time she and the church will share together releasing **Sid** as they start a new era in Trinity's ministry.

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash, Association Minister

Personals by Pat Oakes

Faye and Andy Dierksen had a wonderful trip to Chadron, Nebraska, in mid-April to see some of **Andy's** and some of **Faye's** family. The much anticipated **Papa Deek** meets **Baby Deek** visit happened and it was wonderful! **Deek** also got to meet **Faye's** paternal step-grandmother **MaryAnne Wefso**. After Chadron they drove 3 hours north to Lead, SD, where they saw **Faye's** younger brother **Charles** and his wife **Kristen** and they, too, met **Deek** for the first time. Then they had a lovely weekend with friends and drove back to Austin. On their way back, they stopped for a little photo shoot at the post office in the town they were married in. They were married in Halsey, NE, on September 1, 2012. Their dear friend **Tyler** lives really close to **Halsey** and his family owns a bar there. Halsey is about half way between the west and east sides of Nebraska and they love the Nebraska national forest there, so they chose it for their wedding location. They stopped on their way home from their April trip to see **Tyler** and decided it would be a fun tradition to grab a picture whenever they pass through there! If you look carefully at the wedding picture, you can see Andy without a beard or hair and their good friend **Doug Ingalsbe** (who has come to church many times here) is second in from the left. They were home for a week and then flew out (**Deek's** first plane ride!) to Venice, Florida, to visit her parents for Mother's Day and the week following.



4/21 Faye's mom Cameon Jacobson and her dad Jim Wefso with darling Deek in Florida



4/21 Lower picture--Faye and Andy's wedding party 11 years ago; top Andy and Faye Dierksen with their son Deek where they had a wedding photo taken in Ralston, NE, in 2012



4/21 4 generations--Andy Dierksen holding Deek, Andy's dad Bart Dierksen, and in the chair is Deek's great-grandfather Harold "Deek" Dierksen



4/21 Blissful Deek enjoying his first plane ride--off to Florida

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

Chester Rosson is pleased to report that he got very good news from his most recent oncology appointment. He doesn't have any cancer markers at this time. He has a 75% chance that the cancer will not recur. He has opted not to have chemo, but to be closely monitored by the oncologist and surgeon. He is happy! He had to take into account his age, other medical issues, and quality of life. The oncologist agreed that this seemed like the best decision, given that **Chester** will be following up with him every three months. **Robin and Julia Rosson and Barbara Burnham** all support his choice.

Debby Kohrt recently had a wonderful family outing with the **Parkhill** family. On April 24th they went to Bee Tree Farm and Dairy in Manor, Texas, to cuddle with baby goats. They all had so much fun at the farm. Of course, there is a little gift shop there that sells goat cheese, honey and other farm goodies which they also enjoyed visiting.



4/24/21 Debbie Kohrt had a great time making friends with a baby goat at Bee Tree Farm and Dairy in Manor



4/24/21 Zoey, Kirstin, and Caleb Parkhill with a baby goat



4/24/21 Zoey Parkhill loves baby goats, and they love her, too!



4/24/21 Caleb and his dad Jason Parkhill going gaga over baby goats

Tess Howicz graduated from Stony Point High School in Round Rock on May 26. She will be attending the Missouri School of Journalism at University of Missouri in Columbia starting this Fall. As with all graduates this year, her senior year was bittersweet; however, she made it through, and had a successful year as the school newspaper's Editor-in-Chief. **Tess** is hoping to work at Dell Diamond this summer, where she had just been hired prior to the pandemic last year.

Photos on next page

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes



4/12/09 Easter cross with Tess Howicz



5/17/21 Tess Howicz, 2021 graduate of Stony Point High School in Round Rock

Alden Harris graduated from Gonzalo Garza Independence High School on Friday, May 28. He is working on finding a summer job. He will be attending Austin Community College in the fall, getting basic courses taken care of, and he plans to apply to UT his sophomore year to major in biochemistry.



8/25/13 Alden received his Bible from the Deacons in 2013



May 2015 Alden Harris, Garza graduate

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

Isabella Dietz, daughter of **Kevin** and **Rachel Dietz** and big sister to **John** and **Francesca**, graduated from McCallum High School on June 1st. She is working on finding a summer job, also, and is looking forward to attending Trinity University in San Antonio in the fall. She has not selected a major yet, but is very much looking forward to the college experience.



4/8/12 Easter Sunday with Isabella Dietz



5/15/21 Isabella Dietz will be attending Trinity University in San Antonio in the fall —she was there in mid-May during a welcome rain shower

John Goff led a team conducting marine field work for 2.5 weeks in the Gulf of Mexico. Their funding came from both the Texas General Land Office and the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management with the goal to map sand resources for beach and dune restoration. The photo shows **John** and 2 of his colleagues out at sea. There were several news stories about the project, including one that made the front page of the Houston Chronicle (and was reprinted in the Statesman)! In other family news, **Cameron** is in the second year of medical school and has started clinical rotations (including flying to pick up organs for transplant). **Megan** is spending the summer in Chicago and has one year left of Art School – she recently adopted a cat now that she has moved out of the dorms into an apartment. **Gail** has enjoyed her time working at home with **John** and 3 cats, but is now ready to transition back into the office.



5/21 John Goff (center) and 2 colleagues taking a break from doing research in the Gulf of Mexico

Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

Bob Garrett had his appendix removed in early May—something completely unexpected. This was not due to appendicitis but to an enlarged appendix that showed up on a CT scan and it was strongly recommended that he have it removed pronto—which he did. He is back working on PT through an outpatient program.

Don Miles had a wonderful 3 day celebration of his 85th birthday over the weekend of May 16th (the birthday) in Sunrise Beach, MO. It was a double celebration as his grandson **Garrett** celebrated his 30th birthday—a really special present for **Don** on his 55th birthday 30 years ago. There were 16 folks in all—his two children—**Juliette M. Ritzman** and **Richard Miles**, their spouses, 3 grandsons (2 with spouses), and his FOUR great-grandchildren, and the **Ritzman** great-grandparents. **Don** drove to and from, but had an accident (no injuries) in Arkansas on his way home. He is pleased to report that he happened to find a Honda Accord that was almost identical to the one he had put 212,000 miles on since 2007 but looking brand-new with an impeccable interior at Howdy Honda in Austin. It had only 75,000 miles on it.



5/16/21 Don Miles and crew at a celebratory family reunion in Sunrise Beach, MO

David Pinkard, younger son of long-time members **Tommie** and the late **Doyal Pinkard**, has some exciting news. He is in the process of purchasing a wine and spirits shop in Woodstock, NY, a beautiful little burg in the Catskills filled with art galleries, outdoor markets, and lots of history—

including its connection to the 1969 music festival. For **David**, it's been a long road, much more difficult than he ever imagined, and there are still some hurdles to clear, but it is looking good. He reports that he was unaware of how comfortable and free of challenge his life had become while living in Brooklyn all these years. This move has remedied that situation with great clarity. He moved up there several weeks ago on his own. His wife **Suzanne** and 9-year-old daughter **Daphne** will stay in Brooklyn through June to finish out the school year. He is staying in Air B&B's through the end of May, then hopefully will have a more permanent place for the family to land starting in June. He thinks **Daphne** will really enjoy life up there. She's more of a country mouse than a city mouse.

Tommie Pinkard reports from Brevard, NC, that she recently had a lovely afternoon to evening visit with her goddaughter **Wendy Nordstrom**, daughter of **Tommie** and **Doyal's** dear friends **Barbro** and **Joe Nordstrom** (who attended our church many times when they would come to Austin for visits from Houston), a friendship that goes back to New England many years ago. **Wendy** was in the area as the parachuting group she belongs to was there for a jump. The group travels all over the country to perform.

On Mother's Day, **Marilyn Gaddis** and **George Carruthers** were hosting a Mother's Day lunch with **Rob, Sandra, and Jonathan Carruthers**. Glancing out the window while enjoying the meal, they saw a doe come by with her baby. The fawn evidently was "brand new" and was having difficulty walking! What a wonderful sight for Mother's Day, a "new" mama sharing "her baby" with "her" humans! No picture! They were afraid to startle her! She has been leaving the baby outside their bathroom window each day.

Mel and Pat Oakes got the surprise of their lives when their 3 daughters conspired to create a milestone birthday video with contributions from friends and family from far and wide. **Mel** turned 85 on May 11th (it should be noted that **Mel** is 5 days older than **Don Miles**) and **Pat** will turn 80 in late June. **Pat** alternately wept (surprise!) and laughed all the way through—and **Mel** was just amazed and delighted. They watched the video with **Beth, Sarah,**

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

and **Mardie** on **Mel's** birthday—all enjoying laughing and remembering so many wonderful people in their lives. They had to stop after 1 1/2 hours so that **Pat** and **Mel** could eat a quick supper and get ready to welcome neighbors who had been invited for **Mel's** favorite birthday cake—German chocolate. They finished up the video the next night when the five of them got together again on Zoom. They might have celebrated differently if not for the pandemic/quarantine, but the video is a truly lasting and wonderful keepsake.

We have brought **Kyle Riley** on board as our Director of Online Ministries. **Kyle** has been producing our services since mid-May and is continuing to bring his own unique style to the table as he settles in. **Kyle** is a recent graduate of The University of Texas at Austin, where he studied History and Religious Studies. He served as President of Labyrinth Progressive Student Ministry for the last year at UT. He will be attending Duke Divinity School in the fall as part of their Hybrid Master of Divinity program. **Kyle** was born and raised in Hereford, TX, and moved to Austin in 2018 to start his undergraduate degree at UT. He loves spending time with his significant other, **Scout**, and their two dogs, Max and Garrett. They have been spending the last year together trying new recipes at home, making their way through several new podcasts and audiobooks, and taking evening walks through their neighborhood in East Austin.

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

As the church is making a decision about our interim pastor, you might be interested in knowing something about two relatively recent interims who served us well in other times of transition .



Rev. **Sarah Bentley** served as interim between the Rev **John Towery** and Rev. **Yoshi Kaneda** from February 1st - August 31, 1989. For more information on **Sarah**, go to <https://www.patandmeloakes.com/PatandMelOakesFamilySite/CAHistory/SarahBentley.html>.



Rev. **Rich Thompson** served as interim for use between Rev. **Kaneda** and Rev. **Tom VandeStadt** -- from January – June 2001. For more information on Rich, go to <https://www.patandmeloakes.com/PatandMelOakesFamilySite/CAHistory/RichThompson.html>.

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.