

LETTERS FROM THE OTHER SIDE

A documentary by independent filmmaker
Heather Courtney

Official Selection, SXSW Film Festival 2006
Official Closing Night Film, Slamdance Film Festival 2006

“A much needed examination of the collateral damage of illegal immigration... sensitive ...effective and emotionally potent. *Variety Magazine*

“Impressively thorough...painful and honest.” *Austin Chronicle*.

“Wow...my whole church should see this movie!” Rev. Tom VandeStadt,
Congregational Church of Austin, UCC

There you have it, the reviews are in...”Letters From The Other Side” is *must see*.
And you are going to have the opportunity to see it from the comfort of your own pew.
That’s right! The film will soon be shown at:

The Congregational Church of Austin, United Church of Christ
Monday, May 22, 7 pm

In “Letters From The Other Side”, Austin independent filmmaker Heather Courtney gets to know and films Mexican men and women on both sides of the border—men who have made the dangerous and illegal journey to the north in search of work, and the wives, children, mothers, and siblings they have left behind.

In the film, you meet:

Carmela and Laura, whose husbands died when they suffocated in the back of an 18-wheeler in Victoria, Texas in 2003.

Eugenia, whose husband left eight years ago and has stopped sending money, and her fifteen year old daughter, Maricruz, who has deeply conflicted feelings about the father who left her when she was seven.

Maria, who sews corn on a bleak central Mexican landscape, whose eldest sons have left the farm for the US, and whose youngest son is struggling to decide whether to stay on the farm or head north.

Their husbands, sons, and brothers who are trying to make it as immigrant laborers in the United States.

I hope you can make it to the movies...this is a good one! And timely. It will put a human face on the whole issue of Comprehensive Immigration Reform. Plus, you’ll get to ask the filmmaker, Heather, any questions that you have.

TOM

FROM THE BOARD OF DEACONS

Lent was a time for special services and gatherings which gave us opportunities to meet in smaller groups and see some people who have been apart from us for a while. Special services on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday were meaningful times for quiet contemplation; the after church seminars focusing on the series of sermons by Tom and Whit Bodman stimulated interesting discussions; the Lenten Luncheon and service was a very pleasant gathering.

Alleluia!!! We celebrated a warm and sunny Easter this year, beginning with a beautiful, inspiring sunrise service at the top of Mt. Bonnell. This sunrise service is attended by many people who don't worship with us regularly and it's a wonderful way to have contact with our church. We had about 300 people there. The effort that goes into preparing for this service – from the Mt. Bonnell clean-up, to the special music, to providing donuts and hot chocolate – is very much appreciated.

The church looked beautiful for the 11 o'clock Sunday service decorated with the Easter lilies from Marbridge Nursery. We were happy to order from them this year as the proceeds from their nursery benefit the Marbridge Foundation which provides care for cognitively disabled adults. The music was inspiring, as always, and although Tom always shudders at the prospect of preaching after Melanie sings, he rose to the occasion once again and it was a truly meaningful Easter service. The Easter Brunch Bunnies outdid themselves (again) providing a feast that passes all expectations.

Looking ahead, we hope to be welcoming new members soon, perhaps at the end of April. More on that next month (stay-tuned).

PERSONALS

by Pat Oakes

Eunice Paul has a new e-mail address. It is eunice.paul@talktalk.net

A good group enjoyed a special **Lenten worship service** and lunch on Friday, April 7, at the church. Tom led the service and was assisted during communion by John Towery. Lois Drachenberg read the scripture. Also in attendance were Marie Scheel, Cathy Hubbs, Dave and Sara Ross, Tommie and Doyal Pinkard, Florence Castle (who played the piano for the service), Ben and Marguerite White, John Drachenberg, Lynn Lemley, Mary Charles Williams, and Pat Oakes. It was a good opportunity for reflection and for visiting with old friends. Betty Bodman was our gracious hostess on behalf of the deacons.

Clark Hubbs had great news for all of us in mid-April. Clark is feeling just fine. After his latest colonoscopy, Dr. Mangione said, "Come back and see me in three years!" He still has one more hurdle. A PET scan taken during his chemo treatments had too high a CEA score. After three months without chemo, he's scheduled to take another PET scan in May. Meantime he is enjoying fishing. At the recent women's book club meeting at the Hubbs' home, Clark was showing

off his huge (600) collection of T-shirts--most of them with a fish motif--and many of them autographed by notables is Austin and the fish world.

Frances Alford was on Channel 7(FOX NEWS) several times on April 4 between 7 and 9. She was interviewed as a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer in conjunction with the 45th anniversary of the Peace Corps. She sat in her studio and "posed" as a fiber artist.

Lisa and Sarah Kirch had an unexpected adventure in their new home in northern Alabama in early April. Lisa wrote, "Sarah and I dined elegantly by candlelight last night. The setting and the meal, however, were anything but elegant. We were in our basement, and supper was sardines and crackers, with an appetizer of popcorn and a dessert of dried dates. We had broken into our survivalist store, you see, because the sky had been gray all day, both the school and the university had closed hours early, and by five o'clock the air-raid sirens were screaming. Yes, you can hear air-raid sirens even through 16-inch thick walls like those of our house. You can also hear the tag the city attaches to the sirens when they really mean business, a man's voice yelling, "A tornado warning is in effect! Take cover immediately!"... We put the dog on her leash and half pushed-half dragged her down the stairs. ...We sat on the basement floor, and the TV set was blaring the weather report immediately over our heads, and then the power went out. Which was how we came to be dining on the sardines and crackers. "This is the junkiest dinner I've ever eaten," said Sarah, "But it makes me feel like we're in 'Wind in the Willows.'" She said that Ratty and Mole ate sardines and crackers when they were in Mole's house, and then she said she was Mr. Rat, and I was Mr. Mole. She was holding sardines and crackers over a candle flame to warm them, and the cracker edges kept turning black, but the sardines never did get warm. The sky really did turn green. A wall of water came down. It started to flow into the basement and into the depression where the sump pump is. "It's a good thing we have that pump," Sarah said. "It would be a good thing if it had any electricity to run it," I said. I have no idea how high the wind got. I can tell you that there are cherry blossoms glued to every surface of our front porch, including the vertical ones, like the glass storm door. The cherry trees that yesterday still had their pretty pink powder-puffs all up and down their branches look today like they're stuck with thousands of wadded-up pink Kleenex. "Poor cherries," Sarah said. The power went out at about 6:20 and didn't return until 11. "Sarah, I hear the frogs singing," I said in the dark, "If the frogs are singing, it's okay for us to go back up." I have no idea if that was true, but it sounded reasonable to me. We went out on the front porch, where we discovered that the houses across the drill field still had power. "That's not fair," I said, "How come they still have lights?" I was pretty irritated. "Well, at least someone still has lights," Sarah said, sounding more like a grown-up than I did. Sometimes I think she's a better person than I am, too. I felt better when, within an hour, she was standing on our have-not porch, gazing at the houses of the haves and saying, "Too bad we don't know any of them well enough to go over and say we'd like something warm to eat." And this explains why she asked me for warm ramen noodles for breakfast. "Okay," I said. She's breakfasting in bed, feasting with Harry Potter and indulging a new appreciation for electricity. Note

to self: find out how much a generator costs and how one goes about hooking it up. And there you have our news. We're fine."

Savanna, Harrison, and Pam Tucker have moved as of early April. Pam sold the house and they are currently nomads living with some friends in Round Rock. Pam purchased a lot and intends to build, but has made no progress toward that goal since moving has consumed all of her time for the 3 weeks it took to get ready to move. Pam reports that Savanna and Harrison seem to be adapting well to the changes. If anyone needs to contact Pam, try her work number during the day (255-8525) and her cell for evenings and weekends (413-8625). Of course, her email is still good and she receives it at work only. For a mailing address, please use 28 Wilderness Way, Round Rock, TX 78664.

Congratulations to **the Presbyterian-Congregational spelling bee team** who competed in the 3rd annual Great Grown-Up Spelling Bee to benefit the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas. For the third year in a row the team won! From Central Presbyterian church were superb spellers Susan Richter and Kathy Blackburn (accompanied by her unflappable seeing-eye dog Millie) and from our church was Pat Oakes. There were 18 teams competing, 500 folks in the audience, a tuba player adding to the general raucousness, good food, and enthusiastic cheerers (including Doyal and Tommie Pinkard and Mel Oakes). It was a lot of fun for everyone! Thanks to the generosity of the two churches, the team, dubbed "The Church Ladies" by emcee and former mayor Kirk Watson, raised more than \$1600 to benefit much-needed literacy efforts in our area. A grand total of almost \$100,000 was raised by the event. The next to last word was "vibratiuncle" and the winning word was "parterre." Pat did a good bit of her studying for the event while in North Carolina visiting her ill father. Pat drove the 40 miles each way to the hospital and back and her sister Nancy called out spelling words en route.

It was a joy to have **Mary Sinclair** with us at church on Palm Sunday. She had hoped that spouse Richard Jackson (she and Richard moved to the Boulder area a year ago) would be with her, but he had to do some travel for business instead of coming to see us for pleasure. She did bring us sad news from **the Bukasa family** whom our church "adopted" from Congo some years ago. Judith and Martin and the kids moved to New Hampshire several years ago, and it was there that Judith was diagnosed with breast cancer. Sadly, Judith is not doing well and the doctors give her about six months to live. Mary was instrumental in getting the family settled in Austin and became very close to Judith. Judith and Martin named their 4th child Mary, after her. Please keep them in your prayers.

In March, **Tommie and Doyal Pinkard** visited Tucson for the wedding of Doyal's niece Cay. After the wedding, the Pinkards went on a wonderful eleven day tour of Baja California. When they returned, Doyal began a six-week period of radiation therapy for prostate cancer. He feels fine, has had only very minor complications, and expects this treatment to be successful. The treatments should be concluded the first week in May.

Brent Malkus and his band, the Texas Sapphires, were voted Best New Band in Austin and thoroughly enjoyed the 2006 Austin Music Awards ceremony

which was held at the Austin Music Hall. The winners were chosen through the *Austin Chronicle's* Readers' Poll. Members of the band include Brent, vocals and guitar, Rebecca Lucille Cannon, co-lead vocalist with Brent, Jeff Joiner, bass, Ram Zimmerman, drums, Paul Schroeder, banjo and mandolin, and Kim Deschamps, dobro and pedal steel. The band has been together for two years. They are celebrating the release of their new CD which came out on April 18th. The CDs are available at Waterloo Records, Cheapos, or on-line at <http://thetexasapphires.com>.

Rizer Everett has had another busy month. Doctor appointments have been positive, he has been watching migrating birds at his bird feeder and seeing the new leaves appear on the bois d'arc tree on his patio which overlooks Williamson Creek, and he has been enjoying lunches out with his many widowed lady friends. He is particularly impressed with the Tree House Grill and Bar, the Hyde Park Bar and Grill, and Enoteca Vespaio--all places with good ambiance and good food.

Easter Sunday was a wonderful celebration for the Austin church family. Between 200 and 300 folks attended the **Easter sunrise service at Mt. Bonnell**. Melanie Wilkinson outdid the birds and the sunrise with her singing and AIM director Emilee Whitehurst preached a stirring sermon. Tom made everyone feel welcome and folks lingered and enjoyed hot chocolate and doughnuts and orange juice after the service. There was a good crowd at the regular service--all of whom were moved by Melanie's singing, the flowering of the Cross, and Tom's sermon. After the service, young and old alike delighted in watching the children hunt Easter eggs and candy and feasting on the Easter brunch provided by the fun and fellowship committee. Many thanks to Lynn Lemley, Cara Firestone, Carol Barrett, Tommie Pinkard, Pat Oakes, Suzanne Vanderpoel, Comfort Tysen, Lois Drachenberg, and Nancy Binford for bringing wonderful food for all to enjoy.

Chairs of our Boards

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

MAY BIRTHDAYS

2 Louise Froelich
3 Joyce Sinclair
4 Stephen Luna
6 Fran Briggs
11 Mel Oakes
13 Florence Castle
16 Mary Charles Williams

22 Julia Kato Kaneda
23 Heather Cole Fernandez
 Ben White
26 Matthew Wilding
28 Gregg Appel
29 Matthew Tomasek
30 Kathleen Hawes-Domingue
31 Louise Whitworth

FROM THE TRUSTEES

The Trustees have been working with the Centennial Committee to prepare for the Congregational Meeting on May 7. The Committee and architects have completed the proposal for renovating the Church for better accessibility and more attractive entranceways, and to correct and prevent rain water damage. Members of the Committee and the Trustees have been available for the two Sundays prior to the meeting to explain the plans and answer questions. At the meeting, the Congregation will be asked to consider the project and to support the necessary fundraising effort.

We still need Sunday School assistants for the elementary Sunday School class. Please sign up and join the fun!!!

OUTREACH ALERT:

T-shirts are here!!! At long last the new Congregational Church of Austin T-shirts are silk-screened and will be available for purchase after service throughout May. We've set the price at \$10/shirt, with the entire proceeds going to Back Bay Mission - we could raise as much as \$1000. The shirts were purchased at fair-trade prices from the Nueva Vida Women's Sewing Cooperative in Nicaragua, using profits we raised from our own sale of fair-trade coffee and chocolate. So we're benefiting three great causes at once, while also looking stylish as we enjoy our tasty coffee and chocolate.

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.

Deadline for June VISITOR — May 17