

THE VISITOR

May 2019

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

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt



“And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.’ And it was so.”

One of the central claims our spiritual tradition makes is that God created the heavens and the earth. All that exists, all who exist, owe their existence to God. And there were no pre-existing materials that God used to create the cosmos. God commanded creation into existence from nothing. A related claim is that creation belongs to God. “The earth is the Lord’s, and all that is in it.”

On Mother’s Day, we sang a hymn that offered a different image of God’s relationship to creation. “Mothering God, you gave me birth in the bright morning of the world,” the opening line proclaimed. For the parting song, the Trio played a hymn that opened with a similar verse: “Like a mother who has born us, held us close in her delight, fed us freely from her body, God has called is into life.”

The image of Mothering God giving birth is quite different from the image of God commanding creation into existence from nothing. Mothering God doesn’t create from nothing. Mothering God gives birth. From within herself, she births reality into existence—a cosmos, heaven and earth, each person. Everything and everyone that enters into existence comes from within Mothering God herself. Not from nothing, but from herself, Mothering God.

There’s a far more intimate relationship between a Mothering God and the creation she births into existence than there is between a God who commands creation into existence from nothing. A mother gives birth to one who is the flesh of her flesh, the blood of her blood, the spirit of her spirit. Not from nothing, but from herself. Her own flesh, and blood, and spirit are constituent elements of the child she has birthed. The child is part of the mother, yet distinct from the mother. At birth, the child is separated from the mother, yet inseparable from the mother.

If we imagine Mothering God giving birth to all that exists, to the heavens and the earth, to you and me, what are the implications when we say, the earth belongs to God? A child belonging to a mother isn’t the same as property belonging to a property owner. A child—the flesh of her flesh, the blood of her blood, the spirit of her spirit—belongs to a mother in a different way. For one thing, it’s a mutual belonging. The child belongs to the mother, and the mother belongs to the child. They belong to one another. Their longing for one another is mutual. Their love for one another is mutual.

Seeing the mother and child’s mutual belonging to one another cruelly violated horrified and angered many of us when we learned that our government was separating children from mothers at the border. It was malevolent to punish mothers and children by separating them and forcing them to experience the deep, painful, anxious ache of longing for one another while fearing they may never be reunited. Many of us knew instinctively, deep within, that it was not only wrong to separate mothers and children, but a far deeper wrong, a far more unholy wrong, than simply taking property that doesn’t belong to us.

What if we were to understand the relationship between God and the earth in the same way we understand the relationship between mother and child? What if we were to know instinctively, deep within, that the earth belongs to God in the way a child belongs to a mother? Not as property. Not as something created from nothing. But as a child that has come into existence from within her. Flesh of her flesh, blood of her blood, spirit of her spirit. We would know instinctively, deep within, that the way humans are throwing the earth's climate and biodiversity into crisis is every bit as wrong and unholy as separating children from mothers at the border.

How do you see, or understand, or experience the relationship between God and creation? How do you see, or understand, or experience the relationship between God and yourself? Coming into existence, ultimately, from nothing? Being born into existence from within God herself?

What kind of story, or image, or metaphor helps you relate yourself, and creation, to God? What kind of story, or image, or metaphor informs and motivates your response to what humanity is doing to God's creation?

These are some of the questions we will ask ourselves when we gather after worship on May 26 to discuss **Jim Antal's** book, *Climate Church, Climate World*.

Tom

June Visitor Deadline May 29, 2019

Church Leadership

Trustee Chair	Keith Beresheim
Deacons Chair	Barbara Burnham
Outreach Team	Whit Bodman
Moderator	John Goff
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Dennis Murphy
Christian Education Coordinators	Bethany Leach
Youth Sunday School	Amy Kent Rivera
Clerk	Jaime Hadley
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Webmaster	Mel Oakes
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

Heart of Texas Association News

May

by Liz Nash

For those of you reading this article at the start of May, here's a reminder that our **Association Spring Meeting is on Saturday, May 4th, at St. Paul UCC, 5525 Lipas Blvd. in Corpus Christi**, beginning at 11 am. On the agenda is the **Ecclesiastical Council of CJ Wood**: her ordination paper has been sent to our churches and ministers, and we encourage all who attend to read it beforehand. These Councils are always enriching faith discussions! We urge those who cannot make it to Corpus Christi **to attend by Zoom internet link**, which will be set up for the 11-12:30 (voting) part of the meeting, as we need to have a quorum for that time and we value your presence. Those who still need an email copy of CJ's ordination paper or plan to attend by Zoom should contact me right away at (lizknash@gmail.com). **We will only be sending the Zoom link to those who request it and have learned how to use it.** We will set up a "trial run" (takes only a few minutes) for anyone who needs to learn to use Zoom to allow you to find out how to get the Zoom link to work.

Members from at least four of our Association churches, including me, have traveled to Brownsville recently on Texas Impact "Courts and Ports" immersion trips. We went to witness and learn about the situation with migrants and asylum seekers at the US-Mexico border. Two of our Association church members, **Cecelia Hawkins** and **Whit Bodman**, have been part of the leadership for these trips. Members of Friends Congregational, Hope United, Open Cathedral, and Congregational Church of Austin have been challenged, disturbed, and spiritually enriched by participating. Our trips have included observing in the federal magistrate's court as people are brought in groups for what are mainly deportation proceedings; volunteering at the Humanitarian Respite Center run by Catholic Charities in McAllen for those requesting amnesty who have just been released from detention; walking over the bridge into Matamoros with a volunteer bringing supplies to those waiting to request amnesty on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande; and a discussion with a longtime advocate for border issues and migrants in the area. The deportation proceedings were for people, mainly from Mexico, who had been picked up crossing the Rio

Grande, with the largest group being young people in their early 20s, apparently crossing to find work or to join relatives. Our observation both served to ensure that the proceedings follow the law and to see the humanity in what has become an abstract issue for many of us. When we went to the Respite Center, we encountered an almost overwhelming number of families with children and single people being released from detention, there to be helped with bus tickets to join family, with clothes, and with food for the day before traveling on to their destinations the same or next day. These were all people who had been found, in their interviews in detention, to have a well founded fear of violence and persecution in their amnesty claims, about to be released into a long court process to decide whether they can stay in the US. The people waiting without shelter on the Matamoros side are only being allowed into the US in very small numbers each day and week to request amnesty -- some had been waiting there as long as two months, dependent on groups from Brownsville to bring over food, water, and any basic supplies. I believe I speak for all of us who have gone in saying we have been moved tremendously by what we experienced and are searching for ways to respond with compassion. See <https://texasimpact.org/project/courts-ports/> for more information.

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash, Association Minister

Personals by Pat Oakes

On April 4th, our church family lost a treasure. Our church pianist for many, many years, **Florence Castle** died suddenly of a stroke/heart attack in the home she had lived in since 1940, a little more than a month away from her 103rd birthday. Her wonderful caregiver **Mary Jo Ingram** and a hospice nurse were with her. The plaque on the church piano, dedicated to her in 2011, refers to **Florence** as “the heart and history of the trio.” She had had hearing and memory issues for several years but never lost her sweet nature, the twinkle in her eyes, happy smile, and love of music. She planned her own memorial service about ten years ago and one of her requests was that the trio play the music she selected—including the hymns. During the service when folks were sharing memories of **Florence** and her late husband **Joe**, **Nodie Murphy** spoke of the wonderful heritage of collected trio music which **Florence** and **Joe** passed on to us. **Joe** composed some of the music and arranged many wonderful works by other composers for piano, violin and cello. **Florence** worked with several generations of young, talented string players through the years including **Robin Rosson** who is now our wonderful sub. It is nice to think that their music lives on through the music which we hear and celebrate each week. She is survived by her loving son **Paul**. If you would like to send a memorial in **Florence’s** honor, **Florence** requested Meals on Wheels, 3227 East Fifth St., Austin, TX 78702. Her Meals on Wheels volunteers who brought her food for more than ten years were among the mourners at her memorial service. For more information on **Florence**, see the History Corner.

Many of us often think of **Marilyn Vaché**, especially at Easter. She came to our church in the early 2000s, bringing with her from her previous church the idea of the flowering of the cross, a tradition we eagerly adopted. Currently, she is in the west, doing a five month assignment for the Indian Health Service on the Navajo Reservation, in Chinle, Arizona. She will finish mid-May and return to Connecticut. She says it’s been a terrific experience, and there’s a good chance she will be back for another stint. She is newly single, so on her return she will be looking for a new place to live, but no doubt close to the Irresistible Couple (daughter **Olivia** and son-in-

law **Matthew**) in Boston. Her fond hope is to make another trip west this winter, including a visit to Austin. We look forward to seeing you in the not too distant future, **Marilyn!**



4-16-17 Jaime Hadley, Marilyn Vaché and choir members in line to flower the cross on Easter Sunday. Marilyn brought that tradition to us when she joined the church a number of years ago

Jo Jensen writes about her husband **Bob Garrett’s** amazing 80th birthday celebration came to pass, “The stars, planets, and family all aligned such that **Bob’s** 80th birthday fell on Easter Sunday and he thought it was just going to be another day we would celebrate together—quietly. Little did he know that we had been planning a surprise party for him since January! He didn’t even get suspicious when his brother and brother-in-law were “unable to make their traditional Palm Sunday visit due to another commitment.” Instead Holy Week began with the two of us attending church, **Bob** sitting alone for the service folding his palm into a cross, me in the back of the church ushering with **Ruth**, then hurrying home to gather my gear for Sunday afternoon Austin Classical Guitar ensemble rehearsal. By the time Holy Thursday arrived, **Bob** seemed to be content with his approaching birthday as “just another day of the week.” Unbeknownst to **Bob**, his brother, **Lynn**, and **Lynn’s** husband, **James**, had been driving from north Texas and texting me throughout the day.

Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes

They planned their arrival in Austin to coincide with **Bob's** kids' arrival at the airport from New England. Upon receiving a text indicating their arrival time at the house, I casually unlocked the front door. **Bob** was seated in his favorite chair when I heard the front door open. With no view of the hallway, **Bob** just look puzzled for a second or two until the stream of family stood in front of him saying, "Surprise!" And surprised he was! **Lynn** (younger brother) and **James** (brother-in-law), **Laura** (older daughter), and **Amy** (younger daughter) with her husband, **Matt**, completed the surprise. We were all thrilled to have kept the surprise from **Bob**. It had been many moons since we were all under one roof as family, so there was abundant joy and endless conversation over the next few days. Easter Sunday morning, **Bob** and **James** were nonchalantly sent to pick up the pre-ordered food for our Easter/80th birthday dinner while the rest of the family decorated the house for a party. By the time **Bob** and **James** returned, the house and dinner table were loaded with 80th birthday décor. Just one more surprise for the birthday guy! Dinner (**Bob's** favorite...BBQ), followed later with birthday cheesecake (**Bob's** favorite dessert), and a few more surprise gifts, was a rousing success! Every evening during the family's visit, and many since, **Bob** has smiled and remarked about how surprised he was with "the best birthday ever!" Of course, when the time came for everyone to fly or drive back home, we were sad to see them go. One thing we know for sure...we had given **Bob** memories to last the rest of his life!



4/21/19 Family members with Bob Garrett, 3rd from the left, on the occasion of Bob's surprise 80th birthday celebration



Quilt of Valor with all of Bob's military medals—made for Bob by a friend of Jo's.

Joan and **Bill** Mueller celebrated their 63rd wedding anniversary with a brunch and a small party on Sunday, April 7. The actual day was Saturday, April 7, 1956, when they married in Alameda, California, at the historic First Presbyterian Church. Congratulations, **Joan** and **Bill**!



4/7/19 Bill and Joan Mueller celebrating their 63rd wedding anniversary

Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes



4/7/1956 Joan and Bill Mueller on their wedding day

Keith and Darcy Grostick Beresheim had a wonderful weekend getaway in San Diego, CA, the last weekend of April. They enjoyed the sights, good food, and being together.



4/26/19 Keith and Darcy Grostick Beresheim at Broadway Pier, San Diego.

It was a real pleasure to see **Joshua Sabik** at church on Easter Sunday. We haven't seen him in a while as he has been very busy in his new job as a 7th grade math teacher at Del Valle Middle School. As a first year teacher, he is finding it very challenging and rewarding to be working in a Title 1 school. Del Valle Middle School serves 972 students in grades 6-10. The percentage of students achieving proficiency

in Math is 64% (which is lower than the Texas state average of 75%) for the 2015-16 school year. We know **Joshua** is doing his best to help the kids become more proficient.

It was also good to see **Julia Deisler** at church on Easter Sunday. She has sold her home and will be moving to New Mexico mid-summer. She became a massage therapist about 20 years ago and has had a number of folks at the church as clients. After the service, **Julia** connected with **Becky Nash**, also a massage therapist just starting out, who now may be helping some of **Julia's** former clients from church. Networking at its finest.

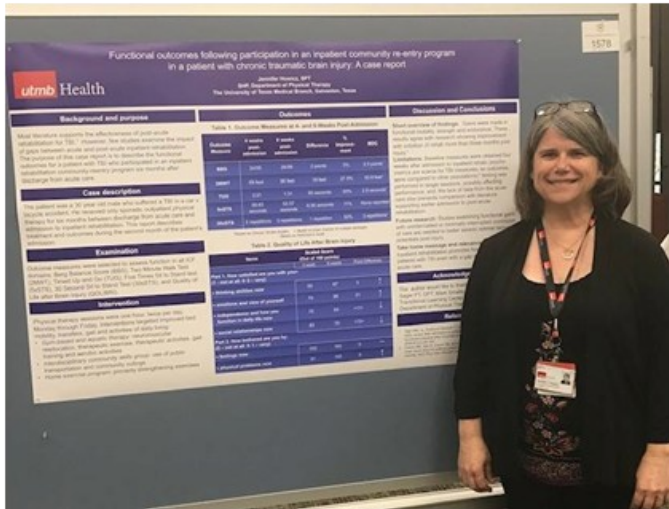
George Hetrick represented the Congregational Church of Austin in the Hill Country Ride for Aids on Saturday, April 27th. **Tom VandeStadt** and **Robin Chapman** had planned to participate, but **Florence's** services took precedence. **George** got to the starting line just as the ride began, so by the time he was ready, there were only a few people left to start. The result was a bonus hug from **Prentiss Douthit**, the Ride Director of HCRA for the past six years, who is also an amazing artist. It was a glorious day and along the way **George** enjoyed the beautiful Texas wildflowers which were still in bloom. He also really enjoyed the barbecue lunch—real down home Texas barbecue. He rode 27 miles in 2 1/2 hours and raised funds for a great cause. Good job, **George!!**



4/27/19 George Hetrick enjoyed the beautiful wildflowers while he was riding for the HCRA

Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

Congratulations to **Jennifer Howicz!** School is finished; she presented her capstone project on Friday, the 26th of April, and received her PT degree from UT MB Galveston. She is very grateful for all the family and friends who supported and stuck with her during this stressful two years. She will be taking her board exams later this summer. **Jen**, we are all so proud of you!



4/26/19 Jen Howicz, UTMB PT graduate!!

Many in our congregation remember **Lisa Kirch** who moved with her daughter **Sarah** to **Florence, Alabama**, the University of Northern Alabama, to become an art history professor some years ago. We are delighted to note that, as of this academic year, **Lisa** is a full professor! **Sarah** keeps busy working in Chicago and is doing well. A number of us stay in touch with **Lisa** through her birthday artist project. If you are on Facebook, ask to be friends with **Lisa** and you will see her interesting and informative daily posts. The project started in Chicago two years ago. **Lisa** says, "Don't ask me why, because I don't exactly understand why. It was February, Black History Month, so I was posting African American artists. I kept finding women and their birthdays, so I'd post an African American and a woman. Then it was Women's History Month, and I had to keep going. We got to the end of the month, and I thought, 'One month a year is pretty dumb.' I invited friends to send me names, but only one person took me up: **Gina Tarver**. **Gina** had put her artists in a nice, chronological list. Me? I was writing them on

scraps of paper. Which meant losing them. That was not smart, so I began expanding **Gina's** list. It's now 79 pages long, and a revised book proposal has gone to publisher number four. So far I can't convince anyone that the book will sell, but 'One month a year is pretty dumb' has turned into 'Why do this for only one year/two years?'"

Edith Scott and her husband **David** and son and daughter were in Austin for two years from Strathaven, Scotland, in the mid-1980s and have stayed in touch through The Visitor. This past month she was delighted to see photos of **Beth Placek** back at church. **Sara Ross** was in one of the photos and she swears **Sara** doesn't age! So true. **Edith** retired last June which gives her more available times to drive north to spend time with son **David** and his wife **Nicola** who are now expecting their first baby in September. She and husband **David** are heading to the Italian lakes at the start of May and then they're visiting Krakow at the start of June. A personal note. I have a soft spot in my heart for young **David**. He was about four when I was coordinating the photo shoot of our church directory. I suddenly noticed that the diamond in my engagement ring was missing. After a frantic search which seemed to last forever, **David** piped up, "Auntie **Pat**, is this it?" It was--right at his eye level on the narrow counter ledge between the sink and the edge of the counter. A lucky day!

We also want to be sure and give a big thank you to **Andy Dierksen** for stepping up to fix the wheelchair accessible bathroom door — right before church on Sunday, April 28th. The door had been difficult to open from the inside for a number of us, but no one remembered to report it. Our wonderful office administrator, **Donna Cravens**, contacted **Andy** (knowing about his handy skill set) after she was stuck inside for some time and asked if he could do it. Three cheers for **Andy**!!

The week of spring break gave **Marilyn Gaddis**, **George Carruthers**, and the **Carruthers** clan an opportunity to see the sights and sounds of New Orleans. At the World War II Museum, **George** talked about his experiences using the "Road to Berlin" exhibit as a "backdrop!". The B-17 hanging from the ceiling in the Freedom Pavilion was another "prop" since he was shot down in 1943 in a B-17 near

Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes

Paris. (He spent almost two years in Stalag Luft III near Zagan, Poland.) Beignets at City Park, the Art Gallery, and music on Bourbon Street rounded out the four day trip. Flying back to Austin, **Marilyn** and **George** repacked their suitcases and flew to Miami to join a Road Scholar program studying the Florida Keys area. **Marilyn** had always wondered what those dots on the map running southwest of Florida were and what was the “key” to the “Keys!” They joined 14 others traveling by van from Key Largo to Key West. The two leaders were very resourceful providing information and preparing picnic lunches on the way. The importance of the mangroves in preserving the coral reefs was stressed with visits to the Everglades and Biscayne National Parks, and the **John Pennekamp**, **Fort Zachary Taylor**, and **Windley Key State Parks**. Other highlights included viewing the sunset from Key West’s Mallory Square, riding the Conch Train, and visiting the **Hemingway** and **Truman** houses. The group also took a catama-

ran ferry, on a very windy rough day, out to the Dry Tortugas National Park to visit Fort **Jefferson**. Oh, if those thick masonry walls built from 1846 – 1874 could talk! They'd tell about its role as a naval base, Union prison, quarantine station, pirate hangout, and finally becoming a national monument in 1935 and a national park in 1992. At a stop on Pigeon Key, the story of **Henry Flagler’s** Florida Overseas Railroad unfolded. Starting in 1909, the “key” hosted more than 400 workers building the railroad from Homestead to Key West. In 1935, a devastating hurricane took the train and over 400 lives and brought an end to “**Flagler's Folly**.” Presently, Florida is utilizing existing portions of the old railroad and highway bridges to add to the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail, which will become a 106 mile biking trail from Key Largo to Key West. Before flying home, **Marilyn** and **George** spent three days in Clearwater, FL, with **Marilyn’s** great-niece exploring the Tampa area.



4/19 Indefatigable George Carruthers at the zero mile marker for US 1 in Key West

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

PALM SUNDAY



4/14/19 Nancy Edison (in John Goff's absence) showing the congregation how to fold a piece of palm into a cross on Palm Sunday while Reuel Nash holds the microphone



4/14/19 Longtime friends Katie Lemley and Emily Howicz after church on Palm Sunday--finalizing plans for coordinating the Easter egg hunt for the children on Easter



4/14/19 Emily Howicz and Katie Lemley were hard at work making palm crosses for Palm Sunday following Nancy Edison's instructions—photo by Jo Jensen



4/14/19 Brett Allen had a special guest for Palm Sunday—as he was dog-sitting for well-behaved dog Chicken

Photos cont. on next page

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

EASTER SUNDAY



4/21/19 The bare unflowered cross before the service on Easter Sunday



4/21/19 The choir singing the anthem in front of the beautiful flowered cross--l-r--Dennis Murphy, Amy Harris, Sara Ross and Chester Rosson, hidden, Roberto Hernandez, Lucy Erda, Don Miles, Sarah Darter and Cathy Hubbs, Barbara Burnham, and Nodie Murphy



4/21/19 The flowering of the cross begins



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

Photos cont. on next page

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

EASTER SUNDAY



4/21/19 Nick Leach found a lot of Easter eggs!!



4/21/19 Hattie and Nick Leach hunting more eggs while Vivian Zercher beams with her collection of eggs

History Corner

Pat and Mel Oakes put together a slide show in memory of **Florence Castle**. Many thanks to **Florence** who shared some of the old pictures over the years and to her son **Paul** who shared some wonderful treasures with us recently. It was shown before and after the memorial service and at coffee hour the following day. The slide show is now on the church Web site and the link is included below. We have included a few of the pictures for those who don't have access to the internet.

https://chi-node30.websitehostserver.net/~patandme/CCAHistory/Images-ChurchSite/Church_Music_and_Musicians_files/Florence%20Castle%20Memorial%20SlideshowWithMusic.m4v



5-13-19 Florence Caskey (Castle). 3 years old



8/25/1938 Joe and Florence Caskey Castle
wedding photo La Salle, IL



1940 Florence and Joe Castle in concert at the Texas
Federation of Women's Clubs in Austin

Photos cont. on next page

History Corner, cont.



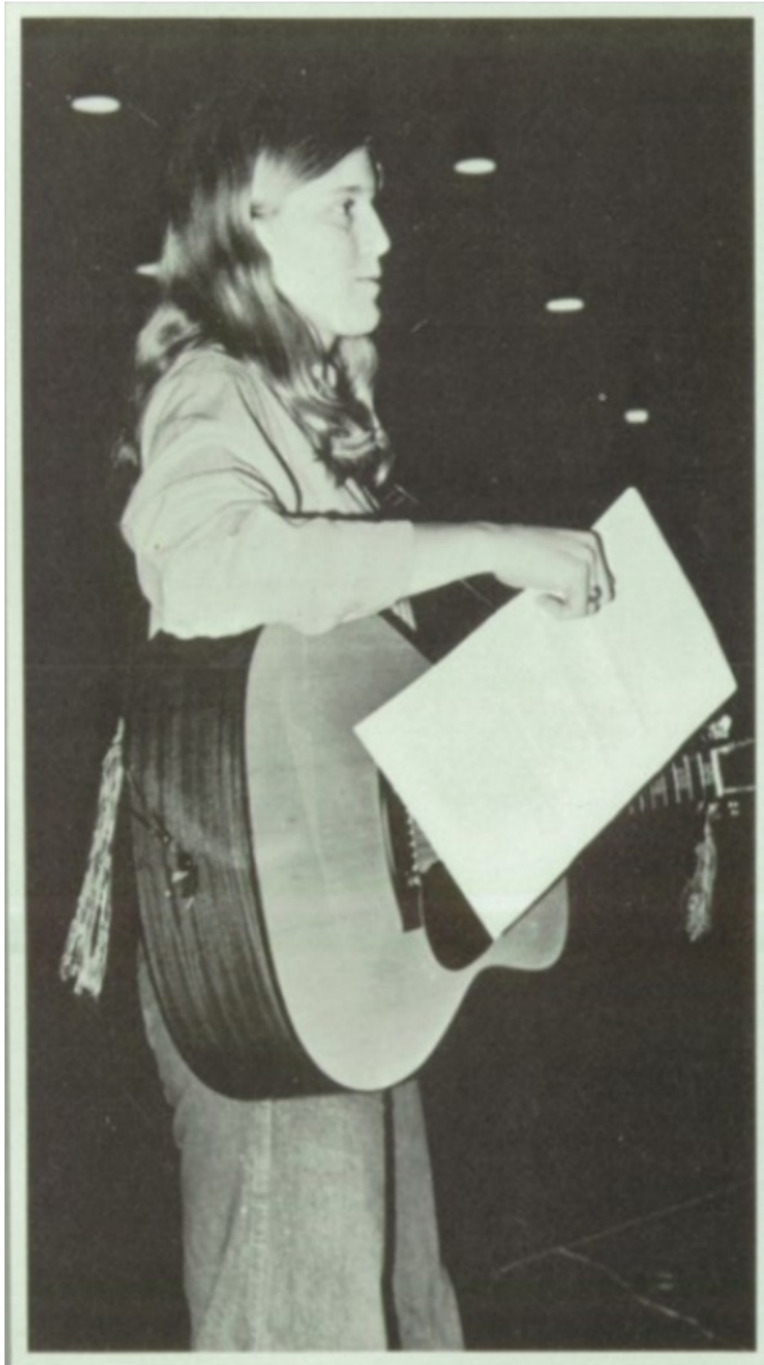
March 18, 2012 Florence Castle, Robin Rosson and Julia Ross with their daughter Samantha and her paternal grandmother Barbara Burnham at church—Robin and Julia fell in love while playing in the trio



January 2019 Florence Castle at her Mason and Hamlin piano at age 102 1/2--her last photo at her beloved piano--taken by her caregiver Mary Jo Ingram

History Corner, cont.

Our new feature—Guess Who?—only had one person guess—and Reuel Nash got it right. It was Pam Tucker—and here is another treasure to go with the first photo. If you would like to participate, send your entry to oakes@utexas.edu—and please identify it for me! I look forward to hearing from a lot of you.



Pam Tucker, McPherson College, 1977