

# THE VISITOR

October 2019

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

408 West Twenty-third Street, Austin, Texas 78705-5214

(512) 472-2370

E-mail: [ucausti@swbell.net](mailto:ucausti@swbell.net)

Web site: [congregationalchurchofaustin.org](http://congregationalchurchofaustin.org)

**Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt**



**I**n September, a number of us read and discussed the book *Evicted* by **Matthew Desmond**. *Evicted* focuses on the lives of several poor African-American women and their children, several poor African-American men, and several poor white women and men. They live in Milwaukee, a poor northern rust-belt city that's racially and ethnically segregated, and they face eviction from the house, apartment, or trailer they rent.

**Desmond's** book helped me understand the pernicious relationship between being evicted from one's home, and being evicted from mainstream society. When one is evicted from one's home, one is far more likely to be evicted from mainstream society. And when one is evicted from mainstream society, one is far more likely to be evicted from one's home—again and again. It's a spiraling circle that pushes people further down and out.

Poor urban African-American women illustrate the point. **Desmond** reports that poor urban African-American women suffer repeatedly from eviction, and "the total number of black women in eviction court exceeded that of all other groups combined...If incarceration had come to define the lives of men from impoverished black neighborhoods, eviction was shaping the lives of women. Poor black men were locked up. Poor black women were locked out."

After reading *Evicted*, I read another book called *Squeezed* by **Alissa Quart**. **Quart** focuses on people who experienced a solid middle-class upbringing, yet are now so squeezed by economic pressures that their standing in the middle class is highly precarious. They live in fear of being evicted from the middle class.

Many of these people have college degrees, yet the anticipated stable career never panned out. They live on the edge of a financial cliff, paying off college debt, paying over 30% of their income on mortgage or rent, paying for child care, paying for insurance—on a teacher's salary plus 20 hours-a-week driving Uber, or two 30-hour a week low-wage jobs without benefits, or sporadic tech contract work and pizza delivery. They have little to no savings in the bank and no retirement plan. They're one financial emergency away from economic crisis.

**Quart** writes, "these people believed that their training or background would ensure that they would be properly, comfortably middle-class, but it has not worked out that way." Many of these people blame themselves for their precarious position. Their parents, who worked in respectable working-class jobs or had professional careers, raised them in a solid middle-class environment with the expectation that they would do at least as well. Yet they're not, and they feel shame. How did they miss the boat? What did they do wrong?

After reading *Squeezed*, I moved on to *Nomadland* by **Jessica Bruder**. She looks at what a growing number of formerly middle class people are doing once they reach their 60s and 70s—living in RVs, vans, trucks, and cars. Some of these people were literally evicted from the middle-class when they lost their jobs, homes, savings, and retirement. Others lived so close to the financial edge for so long, they decided to quit struggling to make it in the middle class and to use what little savings they had to buy a vehicle in which to live.

Many of these “retirement-age” folks work during the Christmas shopping season at massive Amazon warehouses and during the summer as campground hosts. They operate rides at amusement parks and staff cotton candy booths at state fairs. They install solar panels on their vehicles, use 5-gallon buckets as toilets, cook on camping stoves, and own only what they can fit in their vehicles. They park in the desert, in the mountains, in the woods, in urban parking lots, on suburban neighborhood streets. They develop on-line relationships with one another, and congregate at large gatherings to socialize, share information, buy and sell goods, support one another, and mentor folks just starting out in that life.

One woman reflects on the bittersweet reality of choosing to live in a vehicle because it’s the best or only option: “I can’t decide if it’s sad or hopeful that SO MANY of the folks I talk to in my various RV groups are going full-time because of financial hardship. I suppose it’s bittersweet. The new freedom...able to live while reinventing oneself. Thank goodness for the deep and varied Tribes out there that offer so much guidance, advice, stuff, and willing ears. Is this the evolution of the former middle class? Are we seeing the emergence of a modern hunter-gatherer class?”

These three books offer eye-opening glimpses into how some people are living in our nation today, and I recommend them to you. Those of you who feel squeezed by economic pressures and financial hardship may find you identify with some of the people and situations you encounter in one or more of the books. These books reinforce for me the importance of our church’s participation in Austin Interfaith. Austin Interfaith is committed to supporting poor and middle class people in their efforts to organize to create a society of shared prosperity, one that doesn’t render people’s lives so economically precarious that they fear being evicted.

**TOM**

## **November Visitor Deadline October 25, 2019**

### **Church Leadership**

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**  
**October**  
**by Liz Nash**

**E**vangelical UCC in Lyons welcomed **Jacqueline Lamensky** as their new designated pastor at the end of July. She comes to Lyons after serving Friedens United Church of Christ in Bern, Kansas for almost five years. Many here in the South Central Conference and in the Heart of Texas Association are also welcoming her back since **Jacqueline** spent her childhood at Immanuel Church in Needville, later was part of Faith UCC in New Braunfels and Friedens UCC in Geronimo, and spent many years at Slumber Falls Camp as a camper, counselor, and intern. After graduating from Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis in 2013, **Jacqueline** was ordained at Friedens in Geronimo. As she has written in her introduction to the Lyons church, "I am also born, baptized, confirmed, and ordained in the United Church of Christ, it runs in my veins!" I know many of us in this Association will get to know her well. We rejoice with Evangelical Lyons in this new time in the life of their church and pray that, together, the church and **Jacqueline** will have a blessed and fruitful ministry.

Our Heart of Texas Committee on Ministry, at its recent meeting, interviewed **Cameron Burton** for ordination and voted to approve him for an Ecclesiastical Council at the Fall HOT Association meeting. **Cam** is the Spiritual Care Coordinator for St. David's South Austin Medical Center, where he has served as a chaplain for the past seven years. **Cam** is also certified as a professional chaplain by the Association of Professional Chaplains. **Cam** comes to us from the United Methodist Church, which means his path to ordination has differed from our usual process.

Normally, in the United Church of Christ, **Cam** would have been ordained to his chaplaincy position several years ago, but the United Methodist ordination and ministry standing of chaplains is somewhat different from ours. Because there is a professional requirement that he be endorsed for chaplaincy by our denomination as soon as possible, we anticipate that he will be ordained shortly after his Ecclesiastical Council pending a vote to approve him for ordination.

Our Committee on Ministry, at its recent meeting, also granted a local chaplaincy endorsement to **CJ Wood**, who was ordained at St. Paul UCC in Corpus Christi in June to her chaplaincy work in the Christus Spohn Health System. **CJ** has recently accepted a chaplaincy position at Seton Medical Center in Austin. We look forward to welcoming her to ministry in Austin.

Finally, plan to come to the **Fall Association Meeting of the Heart of Texas Association, Saturday, November 16th at Trinity Church of Austin**. We will begin at **11 am (with registration starting at 10:30)**. Included in the time will be worship; the Ecclesiastical Council of **Cam Burton**; possibly an additional Ecclesiastical Council pending the Committee on Ministry's work at its upcoming meeting; a business meeting; and, as always, lunch, good fellowship, and community sharing. Congregational Church of Austin and Trinity are partnering together as hosts. We hope you will plan to join us!

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

**Personals**  
by Pat Oakes

**P**astor Tom VandeStadt sent out the following notice the week of June 15th. "It is with sadness that I am writing to share the news that **Vic Appel**, a long-time and very active member of the Congregational Church of Austin, died Sunday evening. **Vic** served CCA-UCC in many capacities--loving our members, the homeless people we served, the building and property, and the trees lining 23rd Street. For many years, there was no aspect of our church in which **Vic** was not somehow involved, and he opened his home and backyard to many church events and picnics. He was present, and he was a presence. Last year, his daughters, **Cheryl** and **Debbie**, moved him to Connecticut to be closer to family, and that is where he died on Sunday, September 15th. Yesterday, **Cheryl** and **Debbie** sent me the following piece that they asked me to share with you: 'We wanted to let you know that our dad, **Vic Appel**, passed away yesterday, September 15, 2019, during the night. He was surrounded by family and he was at peace. We are missing him already but we know that he is with God, our mom and other loved ones. We are grateful that he is no longer suffering. We will have a memorial service and burial in Austin when it is convenient for all of his family across the country, but right now we are not sure when it will be. We will be in touch. Dad's life (and ours!) has been enriched over the years by your steadfast friendship, support, and love. We remember as children in the 1960's how much he loved coming to church each week and singing hymns with gusto! That enthusiasm for hymn singing continued throughout his final days! After we lost our mom 18 years ago, volunteering for the church building and grounds committee was healing for him. We appreciate our CCA church family always welcoming him to church, even as he had the increasing difficulties associated with his strokes and dementia. We will always treasure the memories of the **Vic Appel** Day celebration in 2017, the send-off to Connecticut commemoration in 2018, and the naming of the Appel Room in the basement in honor of both our parents in 2001 after our mom's passing. Dad loved reading the certificates of honor and appreciation he was presented with. And, because of his memory issues, each time he read over them, he was both delighted and surprised! We are so fortunate to

have you in our lives. We will always be grateful to the entire Congregational Church of Austin family for the loving gifts you have given to us throughout the years. Love, **Cheryl** and **Debbie** (and **Vic** and **Jean**)' "



05/03 Vic Appel—June 28, 1930--Sept. 15, 2019

On September 7, 2019, the piano teacher who gives lessons at the church on Saturday mornings found, upon arrival at the church, that a fellowship hall stained glass window had been broken through and the church had been vandalized. This is the second episode of vandalism in the past 6 months—very distressing. The police were called to the scene. They took a report and crime scene photos of the vandalism. The person or persons who broke into the church attempted to get through more than one window without success (many but not all are protected with Plexiglas) but were finally able to throw a large car jack through one of the stained glass windows on the back of the building in the fellowship hall. They then entered the church and proceeded to throw the coffee spoons out of the window into the parking lot (which the police found rather amusing), rummaged around in the coffee table station, and finally sprayed a (powder) fire extinguisher from the front doors of the sanctuary all the way back out the fellowship hall. It was a mess! Luckily nothing appeared to be stolen and the building, apart from the extinguisher dust, appeared to be in good shape. **Dennis Murphy** was called and he contacted **Andy** and **Faye Dierksen** to see if **Andy** could patch the

**Personals (cont)**  
**by Pat Oakes**

window that had been broken. They, along with good friends in town from Nebraska, **Autumn Mangione** and **Brenton Daniel**, came down to the church and began clean-up. Soon **Reuel Nash** was also on the job. Later in the day **Liz Nash**, **René Slataper** and **Tom Vandestadt** were also able to come help. The day finished with a rearrangement of the fellowship hall which has been going over nicely with the congregation. Tom has the remains of the window in a large bag in his office. The Trustees are looking into ways to better protect our church building. We all thank the volunteers who were able to come in and help with the clean-up. Everything looked just fine for the church service on the 8th and for coffee hour, too.



9/7/19 A police department photo--A heartbreaking sight to see -- a fellowship room stained glass window broken as a means for the vandals to enter



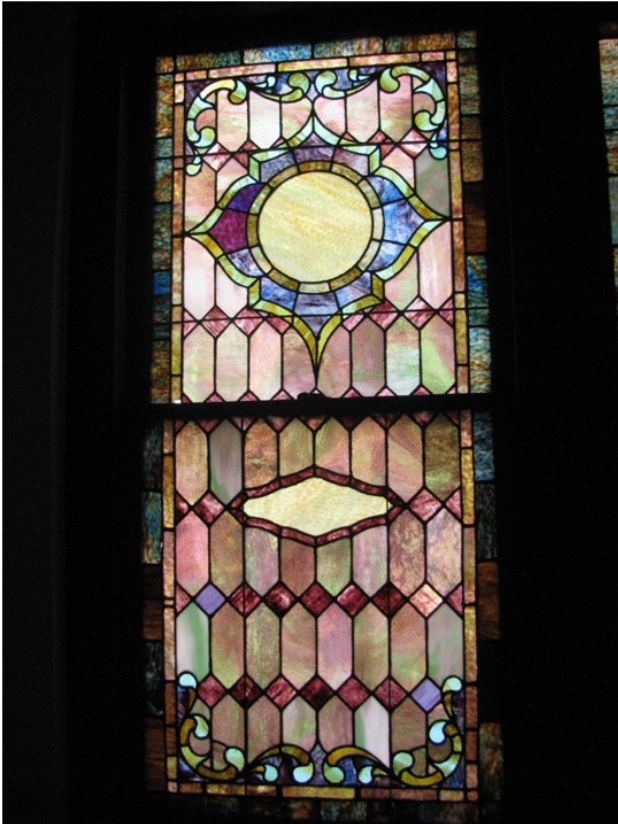
9/7/19 Police department showing the sanctuary covered in dust from a powder fire extinguisher after vandals broke in



9/8/19 On the 15th, the table and the pew were swapped out to prevent congestion at the coffee pot. Dave Ross on the left and Barbara Burnham and Cathy Hubbs on the right

Photo cont. on next page

**Personals (cont)**  
**by Pat Oakes**



Stained glass window, 3rd from the back left, in the fellowship hall—the bottom portion has been broken by vandals

Since the choir is still on hiatus because **Nodie** is temporarily out of commission, the congregation has continued the summer program with more worship gifts. On August 8th, **Victoria Li** gave a very moving reading of a wonderful poem, “A Good Day” by **Brother David Steindl Ranst**,” in memory of her dear friend **Chris Chen** who died very suddenly earlier in the summer. On the 15th, **Lucy Erda** used her lovely singing voice to share a beautiful song “Stones in My Path.” On the 22nd, **Barbara Burnham** gave her own Profiles in Courage recounting three stories of anonymous brave clients she has worked with as a psychotherapist over the years.



9/8/19 Victoria Li giving her worship gift

We all have been missing our stellar choir director **Nodie Murphy** terribly. She (with lots of help from **Dennis**) has spent the past 5-6 weeks nursing a very painful left knee. Her right knee was replaced 9 years ago. She had her second knee replaced on September 25th and we hope to see her back in our midst soon. This summer for her worship gift she gave a very well-received presentation on hymns and words and music and how they all can fit together in so many ways. **Mel Oakes** decided it would be a valuable addition to our church Web site providing an opportunity for those who missed it to enjoy now. The trio, **Jonathan Geer**, pianist, **Amy Harris**, violin, and **Tony Rogers**, cello, were more than willing to record their parts in the presentation. The music is there, **Nodie’s** explanations are there—and you can sing along! The presentation can be found at

<https://chi-node30.websitehostserver.net/~patandme/CCAHistory/HymnalWorshipGiftNMurphy.html>



9/15/19 Lucy Erda singing her worship gift

Photo cont. on next page

## Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes



9/22/19 Barbara Burnham presenting her worship gift

One Sunday this summer, the first Sunday **Tom** was back from his vacation, there was no "reflection" in the worship service. Instead, **Dennis Murphy** filled the time with a piece he'd written about people he'd encountered at the Round Rock Area Serving Center while volunteering there in the Client Services Department. Previously, from time to time, **Dennis** had mentioned a couple of his Serving Center clients during our "Joys and Concerns," and some of our members had later told him they'd like to hear more about the people he was meeting there. That gave him the idea that he might do a thumbnail sketch of two or three of his clients as a worship gift. While he was thinking about this, sometime in the spring, **Tom** happened to ask **Dennis** if he had any interest in speaking at more length about his experiences doing intake at the Center. **Dennis** chewed on that for a while, and decided to give it a shot. The result was way too long for a worship gift and not even close to the usual sort of "reflection," but it was what he had to offer, and he's grateful to Tom and everyone else who was there that morning for giving him the space and time to share what has become an important part of his life. To read the longer piece that **Dennis** wrote, click here for the direct link

<https://congregationalchurchofaustin.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Voices-from-the-Serving-Center.pdf>

or it has been added to the Serve Your Neighbor page under Ministry on the church Web site  
<https://congregationalchurchofaustin.org/ministry/serve-your-neighbor/>

**Andrea Low** and her husband **Paul** traveled in the Texas Hill Country over the Labor Day weekend. They stayed in a tree house in Utopia, watched the bat flight at Frio cave near Concan, saddled up to the bar in Bandera, saw a pro bull-riding rodeo in Boerne, toured Natural Bridge Caverns, and danced and sang along with Red Dirt country music at Gruene Hall. Having moved to Austin from Hawaii not too long ago, they were continuing their anthropological study of the peoples and cultures of Texas—still tourists, but trying to learn to fit in!



Labor Day Weekend Andrea Low and her husband Paul saddled up to the bar in Bandera

**Beth Placek** has been saying for months now that she will be dancing again—and that time is definitely getting close. At the end of last September she was near death in the ICU at Seton fighting to survive a massive sepsis infection which originated in her knees. She has spent the last year at a rehab facility recuperating, gaining strength, doing PT, working hard to keep her spirits up. The congregation kept her in our prayers, friends and family visited—especially her husband **Chencho Flores**. Finally she was strong enough and clear of infection, so she has had both knees replaced within 3 months. She and **Chencho** were in church on the 22nd—and **Beth** was set to go home on October 1st. You can bet she will be dancing for joy when that day comes!

Photo on next page

## Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes



9/22/19 A delighted Beth Placek and her husband Chencho Flores as Beth stands upright with 2 new knee replacements making it possible

(USA) fully inclusive of LGBT members and is doing a great job helping the denomination live into its commitments. **Doug's** contribution to the meeting was to offer an ecumenical perspective to help generate a global concern for inclusion and he led a workshop on the topic. **Doug** remembers the impression he had as a young boy that our church was such an inclusive community. As a teenager he wanted to be a minister, but realizing that he was gay in that day and time, that would not happen if he were open about his orientation. He now sees his ministry as working with the WCC. Both **Eric** and **Megan** live in Chicago with their families. Come back soon, **Doug!**



9/12/19 Doug Chial with Mel Oakes at the church

**Mel and Pat Oakes** enjoyed a wonderful visit with **Doug Chial** in mid-September. It was a little hard to recognize him as the last time they had seen him he was about 8 years old! The **Chial** family (**Mike, Carolyn, Eric, Doug**, and later, **Megan**) arrived in Austin in 1970 and became active members of the church shortly thereafter. **Mike** was on the UT faculty in the Department of Speech and Communications and the family lived in Barton Hills near the **Oakeses**. **Mike** often carpooled to UT with **Mel**. The family moved to E. Lansing, Michigan, in 1976, and even though **Mike** and **Carolyn** divorced within a few years, **Pat** and **Mel** stayed in touch. Both remarried. Some years later **Carolyn** and her husband **Dean Telder** came to Austin for a brief visit. **Mike** is still living but sadly **Carolyn** died of cancer a few years ago. **Doug** was so delighted to have a tour of the old neighborhood and to get to see the church which he remembers well. **Doug** was in Texas from Geneva, Switzerland, where he works for the World Council of Churches (responsible for fund-raising and development) for a meeting in San Antonio—the Covenant Network of the Presbyterian Church USA, a group of churches and clergy who are working for LGBTQ policy changes over time. The Covenant Network of Presbyterians helped make the Presbyterian Church



1976 Mike and Carolyn Chial with their children, Megan, Eric, and Doug

**Personals (cont)**  
**by Pat Oakes**

**Abby Lundgren** writes, "I'm attending graduate school at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, where I'm in a Sustainable Communities program studying the intersection of climate change, sustainable agriculture, and community activism. Those of you who have patiently listened and offered advice while I fretted about finances will be happy to hear I received a complete tuition waiver for the entire year, which means all I have to do is be a student. I'm very grateful for that. I have a standing desk and a quiet place to live within walking distance of campus, and the assignments take a lot of time but are manageable. All is well, and I miss all of you. Love, **Abby**" We are missing you but are so glad that things are going well in beautiful Flagstaff.



Fall, 2019 Abby Lundgren at Northern Arizona University

## History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

**V**ic Appel was an integral part of our church community for nearly 50 years as you can see from the attached pictures. His passing on September 15 brought back a flood of memories—his lively intellect (he served on the UT faculty in the Department of Educational Psychology for many years), his enthusiastic support of the numerous projects he initiated such as the annual church Christmas party which involved a potluck supper and children making decorations who then decorated the tree in the fellowship hall, the planting of the peach trees along 23rd St. and San Antonio, the annual **Luther Burbank** plant swap on the church porch with folks bringing cuttings to share, his love of gardens and gardening, his service on various boards and committees in the church, and his gusto in hymn singing. **Well done, Vic**—a good and faithful servant!



1976 John McNeely & Vic Appel

## History Corner, cont.



July, 1986 Back: Tommie and Doyal Plnkard, Matt Blackstock, front, pastor John Towery, Judy Cole, Vic Appel



February, 2000, Bob Knowlton and Debbie Appel in town to plan their wedding, with Jean and Vic Appel in front of the church

## History Corner, cont.



3/4/01 The church in the springtime--Vic Appel's peach trees in bloom--Vic hit upon the idea of the trees as a memorial to Silas Little who was a member of the church and a retired forester



3/7/2005 Debbie Appel Knowlton with Samuel, Vic Appel with Emily Grace Knowlton



2005 Vic Appel's 75th birthday party--Clark and Cathy Hubbs back left, Vic, Lois Drachenberg, Sara Ross, Robin Chapman, Dave Ross, Suzanne Vanderpoel, Norma Hawes, Barbara Sterling, John Drachenberg, Alex VandeStadt, Katie Lemley, Whit and Betty Bodman, Carol Barrett



11/4/07 Linda Berard and Vic Appel unloading bricks for the sidewalk in the new patio

## History Corner, cont.



3/23/08 Vic Appel on Easter Sunday at church with blooming peach trees in the background



10/6/2008 Vic Appel, Joe McMillan, Matt Blackstock, and Nancy Brown



4/20/08 Vic Appel with Debbie Appel and Bob Knowlton, and grandchildren Emily Grace and Samuel

## History Corner, cont.



4/12/09 Easter brunch with Frances Alford, Cathy Hubbs, Vic Appel and Jim Howicz



8/24/14 Debbie Appel Knowlton with Sam, Betty and Vic Appel, and Emily Knowlton at church



12/14/14 Cheryl Appel was in town from Wisconsin and brought her dad Vic to church, shown here with choir member Norma Hawes

## History Corner, cont.



8/16/15 Debbie Appel Knowlton initiated this photo of long-time folks at the church-- Bob Knowlton took this photo of Pat and Mel Oakes, Tommie and Doyal Pinkard (who were celebrating their 66th wedding anniversary!), Stephen Russell, Vic Appel with Debbie, Rambie Briggs, Dave and Sara Ross, Cathy Hubbs, Fran Briggs, and Nodie Murphy



12/29/17 A mystery party with Vic and Betty Appel seated, Sam and Emily Knowlton, Jaime Hadley as guest detective, Bob Knowlton, sisters Cheryl Appel and Debbie Appel Knowlton

History Corner, cont.



10/14/18 Vic Appel with Stephen Russell visiting at coffee hour



11/4/18 Vic Appel and Cheryl Appel at Appreciation Sunday for Vic

## History Corner, cont.



10/28/18 Vic Appel was one of the lucky raffle winners in the youth group raffle project.  
l-r--Reuel Nash, Barbara Burnham, Vic, and Cheryl Appel