

THE VISITOR

October 2020

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

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt



We had the opportunity to reflect on Julian of Norwich's words this past month: "All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well."

But what do her words mean? Do they mean everything will be OK? I don't think so. Read something else Julian wrote: "God said not, 'Thou shalt not be tempested, thou shalt not be travailed, thou shalt not be diseased;' but God said, 'Thou shalt not be overcome.'"

God never said, storms won't rise up, people won't persecute you, and you won't get sick. God never said, everything will be OK. God said, you shall not be overcome.

I think each one of us must decide for ourselves what Julian's phrase "all shall be well" means, if it means anything at all beyond being a spiritual platitude. For me, "all shall be well" resonates powerfully with "you shall not be overcome."

With that said, I don't believe the phrase "all shall be well" is true.

No argument could ever make me believe it's true. No theology or philosophy could convince me it's true. No guru or saint could persuade me. I don't believe it's true because Julian of Norwich said it's true.

I don't *believe* it's true. I *feel* it's true.

I read Julian's words one day and my immediate response was—wow, I feel that way, deep within, sometimes. What she wrote rang true, it resonated with me. I really do *feel* that way, deep within, sometimes. Even though, intellectually, feeling that way often makes no sense.

The feeling that all shall be well often contradicts the reality in which so much, in so many people's lives, is not OK. Or something in my life is not OK. But maybe that's the point—to contradict the reality I think is real. To pierce the surface of reality with a feel for something boundlessly deeper and wider than the surface I so often inhabit. To feel myself part of this boundless reality—to feel boundless reality within myself and myself within boundless reality. And to feel that within boundless reality all shall be well.

I know, it makes no sense. But I can't help but feel it sometimes.

Anyway, because nobody could ever convince me that "all shall be well" is true, I would never try to convince you that it's true. Each one of us must decide for ourselves whether "all shall be well" is true.

Reflect on your life. Do you think it's true, or does it feel true? At least sometimes?

TOM

"Overflow the Courtyard"

Sunday, Oct. 11 between 2 - 4 pm
at University Presbyterian Church
2203 San Antonio Street, just a block south of Austin Congregational.

This is a drive-through collection event to support the Micah 6 Food Pantry. With the pandemic Micah 6 has needed to change the way we provide food for hungry people. Instead of their coming into the building and browsing the shelves for the groceries they want, people are now given food in individual bags. They can specify whether they want shelf-stable groceries, ready-made salads & sandwiches, or frozen dinners that they can microwave. These are the types of items that are currently in high demand:

Frozen Dinners (Lean Cuisine, Healthy Choice, etc.)
Canned Meat (spam, chicken, tuna)
Crackers
Instant oatmeal
Fruit cups
Canned chili
Canned vegetables
Canned beans



November Visitor Deadline October 23, 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
October
by Liz Nash

The date of the Heart of Texas Association Fall Meeting has been moved to Saturday, October 24 at 10 am to noon (a shift from the original date of October 10) on Zoom. The reason for the change in date is to allow us to prepare for a presentation on the proposed formation of a Conference level Fitness Review Committee. The formation of this committee has been a project of the South Central Conference Board of Directors, and would be a joining of Associations (rather than a taking over by the Conference) in the work of ministerial fitness reviews. I will explain a little more about what this means below.

Our Association Executive Board will be putting the agenda together before the Fall Meeting, but we expect that we will have an emphasis on sharing from the churches about how we are doing our ministry during this time of enormous change, an opportunity to give toward needs generated by the pandemic, an update on what the work and needs of Slumber Falls are, and our normal financial/budget approvals and other brief reports. The leadership of the Heart of Texas Association believes that it is perhaps more important than ever to share from our lives as churches in this time of change.

One of the most difficult, detailed and time consuming tasks of our Committee on Ministry is a fitness review. This work happens when a complaint regarding the fitness for ministry of one of our ministers is raised in a substantial way. There is currently a thorough and demanding process for raising, investigating, and considering these types of complaints that the Association Committee on Ministry uses, as outlined in the United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry and supporting documents. Since fitness reviews do not occur often, Committee members must be trained to understand and to work with this process when one does happen. Additionally, the Committee often needs to do quite a bit of follow up work after a fitness review occurs. Normally, our Committee on Ministry has a full load of work for its meetings working with our Members in Discernment and ministers before the major addition of fitness review work. An ongoing committee, composed of members elected from all of the Associations in the Conference, could do the demanding work of fitness

reviews with members who are trained and experienced in this work. That proposed ongoing committee, as well as a process to be able to join it, will be what will be presented at our Fall Meeting. We would not vote on joining this committee until the Spring of 2021. However, it is important for us to hear what is being proposed, to understand what we would be voting on, and to share feedback about it at this time.

We will be sending out the Fall Meeting Zoom link, the agenda and instructions to all of our churches, to our ministers, and to as many people on our email list as we can once we are closer to the meeting date. It is my hope and prayer that this meeting will be uplifting, informative, and a time of bonding and mutual support in our faith as we continue to do the work Christ calls all of us to do. I hope many of you will join us.

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash, Association Minister

Personals
by Pat Oakes

Whit and Betty Bodman made a four day drive from Austin to their son's house in Whitefish, Montana, camping each evening. They drove by Mount Rushmore on the way to Whitefish. Thanks to practical camping tips from church friends, it was an easy trip and (luckily) without any rain. The smoke from all the west coast fires had blown into Montana, but recent rains improved the horrible air quality making the nearby mountains visible. They arrived in Whitefish to find two sleepy parents and two perfect grandsons. The twins, Arlo and Otis (born quite early on 7/11), are doing well, gaining weight, and eating every three hours around the clock. Whit will return to Austin in early October, but Betty will stay for an undetermined amount of time to help out.



9/22/20 Arlo Bodman—2 1/2 months old



9/12/20 The Bodman's shipshape campsite en route to Montana—note the sleeping accommodations



9/23/30 Otis Bodman--2 1/2 months old

Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes



9/14/20 Whit Bodman at Mt. Rushmore en route to Montana

Bill Phillips (87!!) is working on rehabbing his knee after having a knee replacement for his knee replacement. He had been struggling with pain in the original knee replacement and it was finally determined that there was a staph infection that had been present for some time. He had the 2nd surgery on the same knee in mid-September and came home to daughter **Katie's** place outside of Creedmoor (about 20 miles south and east of Austin) on the 22nd of September. It turns out that it is more expensive for him to come home than to go to a skilled nursing center (where costs would be covered by Medicare) for 6 weeks. The problem is that he will have to have antibiotic infusions (to be sure that the staph infection is completely gone) several times a day, but because of COVID 19, wife **Betty** and daughters **Stephanie** and **Katie** are reluctant to have him at a skilled nursing center. So, **Bill** and **Betty's** daughter **Katie** (who used to play the cello at our church years ago) has been taught how to do the infusions. **Katie** quit her job in Sunset Valley in January and intended to look for a job, but the quarantine has made it difficult. **Betty** says that it is a real godsend that **Katie** is at home and able to do the infusions. They will have some home health, but they will have to buy the

equipment and the drugs, for the treatments. **Bill** is delighted to be home and is doing well. Daughter **Stephanie** is also at home in Creedmoor as she works on her campaign to become the state representative for Texas House District 73. Her campaign is going well as she has hired a campaign manager whose tech savvy is really helping her to get the word out. **Stephanie's** partner **Kathy Weiner** is at their home in Wimberley where she is working as a contractor for FEMA.

The **Ashtons** were part of our church family for many years. **David Ashton** reports that the **Ashton** family is doing OK. **Susan** is in her last year of teaching math at McCallum before she retires in May. The online teaching is overwhelming but she is fighting through it. Eldest of the four **Ashton** "kids," **Jonathan** is staying with his folks temporarily. He is a lawyer and looking for work. **Sarah Ashton Stresing** is married and living in Round Rock. She and her husband have a two-year-old boy and a baby girl due in November. She is teaching math at Taylor High School (very similar to **Susan**). **Jennie Ashton Archer** is married and living in Pflugerville. She and her husband have a 16 month old boy. She is a paralegal and working for a lawyer in Westlake. Youngest of the four is **Katherine**, a Marine helicopter pilot who is stationed at Miramar Marine Air Station in San Diego. **Susan's** dad, **Richard Swallow** is doing well here in Austin. He was the architect who designed our education wing—now called the Towery Wing. He will turn 90 on October 28. They aren't sure what they are going to be able to do for a celebration but they will figure something out. **Dave** is still engineering. He bought the company he has been working for with some of his colleagues when the owner decided to retire in 2016. **Dave** promised them he would keep working until 2026, so he still has a few years to go. They design mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems for commercial buildings (mainly offices) and research and development facilities. Things have been good so far but **Dave** and his colleagues are unsure how the market is going to be going forward. As you can imagine, there are a lot of new variables. **Dave** and **Susan** have been able to see their grandchildren several times over the past 6 months and are glad they live relatively nearby.

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

A good time was had by all at the Zoom baby shower which was given for **Faye** and **Andy Dierksen** on September 15 during the usual e-Slab barbecue time slot on that Tuesday evening. Coordinated by **Betty Bodman** and **Lynne Lemley**, more than 30 folks attended and **Faye** had a great time opening gifts for everyone to see. A high point of the affair was singing the song **Nodie** wrote for them. **Jonathan Geer** (**Xitlali** made a brief

appearance) played the song on the piano and attendees sang and clapped along. Church members were delighted to collect funds and present them with a very tidy sum in a gift card. Thanks to **Donna Cravens** who took care of getting the card. If Faye has not delivered by October 6th, she will be induced at that point. Faye's mom **Cameon Jacobson** arrived from South Dakota on the 22nd and will be helping out now and when Baby D arrives.



9/15/20 Some of the guests at the Zoom baby shower for the Dierksen's --- Pat Oakes, Carol Burlinson, Sara and Dave Ross, Tom VandeStadt, Lynne Lemley, Joy Penticuff, CJ Wood, Carolyn Thompson, Warinda Harris, René Slataper, Barbara Burnham, Nodie Murphy, John Goff, Gail Christeson, Kay Pruett, Ann Locasio, and Dennis Murphy

Photos cont. on next page

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes



If you're happy for the Dierksens, clap your hands! (clap, clap)
Everyone who's had a baby understands (clap, clap)
That sometimes they can be irksome
And they really make you work some,
But while caring for a baby, love expands. (clap, clap)

If you're happy for the Dierksens, stomp your feet! (stomp, stomp)
Our dear Faye will make the baby's life so sweet! (stomp, stomp)
And we know that Daddy Andy
Will be loving, strong and handy
And with joy they both will their new infant greet! (stomp, stomp)

If you're happy for the Dierksens, shout "Hooray"! ("Hooray!")
In anticipation counting every day! ("Hooray!")
Soon the baby they'll be holding,
Rocking, changing, bathing, scolding—
For their happy life together we all pray! ("Hooray!")

If you're happy for the Dierksens, do all three! (clap, clap, stomp, stomp, "Hooray!")
Soon a baby will be bouncing on their knee! (clap clap, stomp, stomp, "Hooray!")
For you all we wish the best
And we hope you get some rest
As we welcome someone to your family! (clap, clap, stomp, stomp, "Hooray!")

9/15/20 The song Nodie wrote for Faye and Andy Dierksen's baby shower--Jonathan played it on his piano on Zoom and we all sang along.

Pam Tucker did not have to worry about COVID 19 when she flew daughter **Savanna** to Seattle to enter college at the University of Washington — she is a pilot and has her own plane. Son **Harrison** came along for the ride. **Harrison** did not have to worry about missing classes here at home as he could attend classes on-line. They left Austin on the 19th, **Savanna** moved into her sorority house on the 23rd and **Pam** and **Harrison** flew back that same day. There was terrible air quality in Seattle the day before they left, but it was very good the day they arrived and for their entire trip: three sunny days, one sprinkling day and one rainy day. **Pam** was able to buy N95 masks for the three of them, so they could be as safe as possible when out and about. The trip outbound was in two legs, each about two hours and a layover of about an

hour in Salt Lake City. The return was a little different, about one and a half hours to SLC and then about two and a half hours to Austin. **Savanna** is planning on majoring in political science on her way to a law degree. She plans to try out for the UW women's Ultimate team which is one of the top teams in the U.S. **Harrison** was able to join them for Pike Place Market on the weekend and walking around campus, but he had to attend school on weekdays. **Pam** was so glad to have him along **Pam** and **Savanna** took advantage of some time to sightsee and went to the Space Needle and adjacent Chihuly Garden and Glass Museum—truly fabulous. The picture of **Savanna** with the mask is on the rotating glass deck of the Space Needle. **Pam** could not go onto the clear glass deck or look over the edge. It makes her insides squirm just thinking about it! **Savanna** has joined the

Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

Kappa Delta sorority after a stressful virtual Rush week. She is very happy as it was her top choice. She will have a readymade group of friends. Otherwise she knew no one at the University of Washington. **Pam** says the campus is beautiful—**Savanna** told her that she calls it "beautiful old buildings in a forest."



9/22/20 Savanna Tucker at the top of the Space Needle in Seattle



9/21/20 Incoming freshman Savanna Tucker (center) with her mom Pam and her brother Harrison on the Washington University campus in Seattle

Warinda Harris's family in Lake Charles, Louisiana, was hit by a double whammy. They are all well and safe, but had to evacuate (one uncle insisted on staying behind), but Hurricane Laura inflicted serious damage and flooding followed just a few weeks later by more heavy rains caused by then tropical storm Beta. Most of the family is now in Houston with other friends and family and are waiting for the infrastructure in Lake Charles to be restored before they can go home and work on getting their homes repaired.

Ruth Koenig is now able to have visitors in her apartment (#135) at Brookdale Westlake. Visitors are required to wear masks the entire time they're in the building and stay no more than an hour, although her son John doesn't think the latter is strictly enforced. Also, she's limited to two visitors a day. Seeing friends from the congregation would do much to buoy her spirits. Come November, son John and his wife Barbara plan to move her in with them for the holiday season, so anyone would also be welcome to visit her at their house during that time.

Frances Alford wrote from Vermont. "I am missing the community I was feeling last January before we went into lockdown. **Mark** and I are back in Vermont but hope we will be able to come back in January 2021. I am having knee replacement surgery in the morning and am looking forward to great results. My 75th birthday is approaching, October 1st. I was 17 the first time I visited our church." In a later e-mail she continued, "My surgery recovery is going very well. It will take some weeks to be back to normal, but the pain is managed and I have great help." **Frances** and **Mark**, we hope to see you both in January. Don't forget you can attend church services virtually every Sunday and join in prayer time via Zoom after the service.

Over the past several years **Don** and **Sharon Brown's** son **Greg** has taken his vacation time from being an internal medicine doctor and gone to Lebanon. His work with the Syrian refugees began in medical tents on the roads which took them away from the disasters. Recently he and two other doctors decided to raise funds for medical supplies and equipment through GoFundMe. **Sharon** and **Don** invite you to read what **Greg** wrote by going to the GoFundMe site, clicking on "Search" in top left

Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes

corner, and typing “MAPS: Medical Funding for Syrians in Lebanon.” or by going to this link <https://www.gofundme.com/f/maps-to-the-futuremedical-for-syrians-in-bekaa>. **Greg** is in the top picture with glasses and will be home on September 26. **Sharon** says, “**Don** and I miss all of you, especially **Tom**, and wish you good health and peace. Their younger son **Andy** is on the November ballot for County Judge. His website is **Andy** for County Judge (voteandy.com). They are all hoping for a good election in so many ways.”



8/20 Greg Brown is in the upper left in this photo montage about the work he is doing in Lebanon

Carol Barrett, a longtime member of the church and still a friend of the church (she is now at United Christian Church on Parmer), launched a flurry of e-mails when she sent an undated photo to **Nodie Murphy** of a Christmas pageant with children in it whose names she no longer remembered—but she did recognize **Ned Murphy**. **Nodie** had some ideas on a couple of names, but tasked **Pat Oakes** to figure out who the rest of the children were. She recognized **Steve Domingue** and **Norma Hawes'** daughters, the **Ashton** children, (who needed to be identified by name, prompting a call to dad Dave) and possibly **Evan Harris**, and a mystery child on the right front. Remembering that **Michael Adams** was active in our church at that time, she forwarded the photo to **Michael** who pronounced that the mystery girl was one of **Kristin Galle's** daughters. **Pat** then e-mailed **Kaitlyn's** grandparents, **Omer** and **Zona Galle**, who now live in Kansas, who wrote back to say that it was **Kaitlyn Newell**, **Kristin's** eldest daughter. **Kaitlyn** now lives in Tulsa, is married to

Sam Kirzner, works in research with Head Start, and she and **Sam** are expecting their first baby (**Omer** and **Zona's** first great-grandchild) in December. **Sam** works with an agency in the area of public health. Her younger sister married **Evan Tiffany** in May as planned, but instead of a formal wedding, they were married by the director of a church camp at the camp (where they first met as junior high kids) -- with parents watching from cars. **Mariah** is the youth minister at a Disciples of Christ church in Houston.



12/95? Susan Ashton, far left edge--back--Kathleen and Bree Domingue, Evan Harris?, Mariah Newell (Kristin Galle's youngest daughter), Robin Rosson, Ned Murphy; front--Sarah, Jennie, Katherine, and Jonathan Ashton, and Kaitlyn Newell (Kristin Galle's eldest daughter)

Joan Mueller shares that her husband **Bill** turns 92 on October 21st. He is in good health and active. **Joan** knows he would enjoy any greetings you want to send him (his e-mail address is Billmueller28@gmail.com and their address is 4200 Jackson Ave. Apt 4013 Austin, TX 78731. And their granddaughter **Charlotte** turns one on October 29th!

Zac and **Heather Lytle** have been a part of our church community for a number of years, even though they have never lived in Austin. They found us while Heather was in medical school in Dallas and they were traveling back and forth from Dallas to San Antonio to visit **Heather's** folks. The plan was to have their son **Oliver** baptized at the church (their late son **Roger** and their daughter **Abi** were both baptized in our church) in mid-March which was the first Sunday of the quarantine. **Heather** has been an ob/gyn at a clinic in Yakima, Washington, after their two year stint in Malawi with their daughter **Abi**.

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

Zach writes, “I started to write a response to your last message but life got in the way. We had a very smoky and stressful week last week. Luckily our town is about 100 miles from the closest fire and recent rains have cleaned the air. Hood River is about a two hour drive from Yakima (where they were living) and one hour from Portland. It’s a lovely town on the Columbia River with lots of natural beauty and outdoor activities. It’s a major mecca for wind surfing and mountain biking that’s a vacation town for many but it also has a nice community of residents. Starting in November, **Heather** will be working as an ob/gyn at the local hospital and also doing some international medicine academic work as a faculty member with the University of Utah. **Abi** has started virtual kindergarten through the local elementary school. **Oli** is enrolled in a three days a week play school. I will probably stay at home with the kids at least until life gets back to some kind of normal. We have been enjoying life in our new town with lots of trips to the beach (on the river) and scooting around town almost always by bicycle. Lots of love to the church and we look forward to days when we can get down there for a proper visit and get **Oli** baptized!”



9/23/20 Oliver (Oli) Lytle in Hood River



9/23/20 Abi Lytle

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

Since we have a number of new folks at the church now, you might want to look at the Church History Web site. Those of you who have been around a while and have never visited the site might find it interesting, too. Reading about our history and those who contributed to the church's mission can be very inspirational. As you will see below, there are many places to visit on the site—so read some and come back again and again. Here is the link to the site (<https://www.patandmeloakes.com/PatandMelOakesFamilySite/CCAHistory/>) which you can also get to by going to the church Web site (<https://congregationalchurchofaustin.org>) and looking for the link under About Us. Note that you can always access the links to the Sunday morning worship service and the Zoom link for joys and concerns on the home page of the church Web site.

Since the history site contains a great deal of content, you will enjoy it much more if you use a desktop, laptop, iPad or similar device. As a small introduction to the site, here are several screen shots to help you navigate. Once you have gotten to the history page, you will want to select Guide to Site. Here are some screen shots of what you will see (they are not live, so use the links above). If you find any errors or notice omissions, feel free to contact **Mel** at oakes@physics.utexas.edu



History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, (cont.)

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 - [Reverend R. J. Briggs First Sermon](#)
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History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, (cont.)

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