

O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are God's judgments and inscrutable are God's ways!

"For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been God's counselor?"

"Or who has given a gift to God that he might be repaid?"

For from God and through God and to God are all things. To God be glory for ever. Amen.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

--The Apostle Paul, writing to the Christian church in Rome,
and quoting the prophet Isaiah and the Book of Job

We are not independent of God but are living on a given breath...Faith tells us that we do not exist simply to live our three score and ten years without pain, with ease and enjoyment, to accumulate possessions, power, or knowledge, to receive accolades and enlarge our egos. How empty such a life would be! Faith is an expression of the fact that we exist so that the infinite God can dwell in us and work through us for the well being of the whole creation.

--Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge*

Everything comes from God and belongs to God. Human hands may extract raw material from the earth, human labor may fashion it into products and stamp a corporate label upon it, human hearts and minds may feel possessive and claim rights of private ownership, but everything ultimately comes from creation, whose source is God.

"For from God and through God and to God are all things."

The Bible instructed our spiritual ancestors to offer God their "first fruits" to acknowledge that everything from the earth—grains, livestock, people—comes from and belongs to God. Paul instructed the Christians in Rome to give their very lives to God, not by sacrificing their bodies on a burning pyre, but by acknowledging God as the source of their every given breath and by undergoing a transformation enabling them to reflect God's will on earth.

Eugene Peterson translates Paul's words for contemporary Christians: "Take your everyday ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering....Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit in without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you."

I believe that when we recognize our dependence on God and offer ourselves to God, God transforms our lives in ways that enable us to promote the well being of God's creation. Self-giving to God is an exercise in spiritual growth and maturation. Through it, God brings out the best within us, and this is good for God's creation. In devoting our hearts, minds, and wills to God, in offering our time, talents, and resources to God, God

receives and transforms these gifts into our own ability to be agents of healing and reconciliation within God's creation. I pray for this every week when we dedicate our offering to God: "We offer you our lives, and we offer you these gifts, and we pray that they may all be transformed into ministries that bring your healing, reconciling love to this world."

Throughout this past year, many of you have contributed time, effort, and money to our Centennial Renovation Project. The time, effort, and money you have given will transform our building into one more inviting, welcoming, and accessible. When complete, our building will more effectively fulfill God's desire to invite more people into our community of worship and ministry.

While our Centennial Committee invited you to pledge time, effort, and resources to support the renovation of *where* we gather as a Christian community, our Stewardship Committee is now inviting you to pledge your time, effort, and resources to *why* we gather as a Christian community. As noted, the *why* includes the recognition of our dependence on God, the offering of our lives to God, and the transformation of our lives into more faithful and powerful agents of healing and reconciliation in God's creation.

The time, effort, and money you pledge to the *why* we gather support our worship and our ministry. They support our spiritual growth, transformation, and renewal through worship, fellowship, and Christian education. They support our ministries that bring healing and reconciliation to God's creation by caring for homeless youth, supporting school children in Kosova and Palestine, and advocating for justice. They support our ministries of care and compassion for members who are ill or grieving loss. They help bring out the best within each one of us, and they promote the well being of God's creation.

May God receive each and every gift you offer, and in doing so, may you experience authentic joy as God brings out the very best within you, for the benefit of Christ's church, and for the well being of God's creation.

Tom

OUTREACH ALERT

The Christian Outreach and Education boards will once again sponsor a school-supplies drive in support of the 400 Voices project. 400 Voices is a sister-city project between the children of Austin and the Trepca School in Stanterg, Kosova, which was wracked by a terrible war in the 1990's. Lacking in basic supplies, a dedicated team of teachers remains committed to helping children learn so that they can help themselves and their country. Through the efforts of Dita Dauti, a Stanterg native who now resides in Austin, school supplies are sent to the school, and letters of good will are exchanged. Last year we collected enough supplies to fill 12 backpacks, which our Sunday school children filled along with a letter from us. We will collect supplies through September. The following items are needed:

Sturdy backpacks

Binders and binder paper

Pens and pencils

Pencil sharpeners

Rulers (metric)
Calculators
Scissors
Tape
Glue
Markers and Crayons

Cash donations would also be very helpful in helping to purchase an electronic language translator.

Chairs of our Boards

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

SAY "CHEESE"

This is a heads-up everyone – heads up and say, "cheese"!! You may remember a project was started to create a picture directory. Unfortunately, Betty Bodman's face broke the camera and things were put on hold for a while. Now the deacons are hoping to make that long awaited picture directory a reality and plan on taking (or re-taking if you wish) pictures of the congregation this fall. Start practicing that big smile

IT'S BAAAACK!

Yes, folks, it's back by popular demand--the CCA Talent Show. Who can forget the Briggs' baton twirling, John Burlinson's putting, Dennis Murphy's barking, Jennifer and Emily Howicz's "Who's on First" skit?

Reserve the date--Friday, September 22 beginning at 6 p.m. We'll have something to eat, then be treated to the dazzling talents of members of our congregation. Nodie will be in the Fellowship Hall gathering "acts" for the show, so sign up early. Remember, the only requirement is that your "act" be less than three minutes long! A good will offering will be taken to further a church project (more on that later).

PERSONALS

by Pat Oakes

Mary Sinclair and Richard Jackson's news is their house in Longmont, CO, is finally on the market and as soon as it sells (3 months in that market, probably) they'll be on their way to Waterloo, Ontario. It will be hard for them to leave Colorado because it's so beautiful there but Richard's work beckons and they want to find a place where Mary's mother can live with them. Waterloo is a university town (where Richard did his Ph.D.) about 90 minutes SW of Toronto

and 90 minutes NW of Niagara Falls. Mary also wants to express her thanks to the congregation for the offering in support of the Bukasa family. Martin was overwhelmed at the help offered to him and the children by his friends in Austin. They are slowly getting used to life without Judith and trying to find their way into a workable routine. There are some problems but the counselors and teachers at the school are helping daily. Mary continues, "And thank you all for the cards and e-mails you sent to me. I have needed your prayers to help get through the loss of my "other daughter." I miss her joy and optimism but now have to focus on helping Martin to raise her children."

Rizer Everett's 90th birthday party held at the Green Pastures restaurant on June 9th was most enjoyable. The food was good, and a fine DVD stereo was made of the affair including Rizer's "Memoirs of the First Ninety Years of the Life of Rizer Everett." Guests included family descendants, colleagues from oil companies, fellow geology consultants and teachers at UT, and members of the Congregational Church and the Englewood Estates Retirement Facility, Rizer's daughter, Dot, arrived in early August for a four day-stay that was very enjoyable and helpful to Rizer in removing stuff from his cottage. Views of deer, raccoons, wild birds and humming birds outside his living room window were enjoyed by both of them.

Barbara Burnham has been busy opening her outpatient psychology practice. She is now more or less ensconced in a cozy office at the Westgate Professional Center in South Austin. In June, she left the hospital group with which she had been practicing, in favor of a solo practice. While she waits for the phone to ring, she is dealing with various insurance companies, as well as other tasks involved in starting a business from scratch. Her son **Robin Rosson** is preparing to enroll at Texas State University in San Marcos in a few weeks. He will pursue his history major, as well as getting a teaching certificate. He will, however, continue to be our cellist on Sunday mornings.

Chester Rosson will be retiring from **Texas Monthly Magazine** on September 15th and moving to Crockett, TX, about 175 miles east of Austin on Highway 21. He is going back to the family home to take care of his 87-year-old mother Selma. His mom has given him 1/3 of the farm and the house which Chester helped to build as part of a family project almost 50 years ago with his grandfather and his uncle. At that time they raised cattle, but now they are raising hay. His mom will be quite glad of the company, says Chester. Barbara Burnham and Robin Rosson are taking over the house in Austin. Chester promises to come back and visit. He intends to keep busy doing freelance editing and German translations into English.

Congratulations to **Mary and Mathis Blackstock** who celebrated their 57th wedding anniversary in early August. Congratulations also to Tom and Robin who celebrated their 18th wedding anniversary on August 6--only 39 more years to catch up with Mary and Mathis!

Marilyn Gaddis flew to Madison, WI, to participate in a Remembrance Service for a long-time friend who unexpectedly died from cancer. The service was held on July 30th at Spring Green, WI, in the Unity Chapel built around 1880

by the Frank Lloyd Wright family. (No air conditioning in the Wisconsin heat wave!)

Liz Nash is thinking of taking on a second career as a travel agent. Getting this summer organized for her family certainly has given her the right stuff! They spent a good bit of time in California. Annie and Becky went to the Northern CA/ Nevada UCC Conference Camp in Cazadero, CA, in the mountains between Santa Rosa and the ocean. Annie had two weeks there: she spent the first week as a Counselor in Training and the next week at Sr. High Camp. Reuel was out in California working. Liz preached at their former church on a very hot day, visited friends and cousins, and one evening stopped by the first reunion of Ellie's old Girl Scout troop. (Liz was one of the leaders until they moved to Austin.) Ellie stayed in Austin because she was working, until July 28th, as an intern for State Rep. Mark Strama. In early August Becky and Liz boarded a train headed for the east coast. On Sunday the 6th, they were all to meet at the airport near Hartford, Conn. Ellie was flying in from Austin, Reuel and Annie flew in from Oakland, and Becky and Liz took a cab down from Springfield, MA. They all headed to their extended family's home in the Berkshires in Massachusetts until Aug. 15, with a stay on Aug. 8 and 9 in Woods Hole, MA, where they joined other family to bury Liz's aunt's ashes. Liz was to officiate, although the task was a challenge, putting together and coordinating a short service with participation from her Jewish cousin, atheist uncle, Quaker cousins, etc. This took some thought -- nothing from the UCC Book of Worship works for this group. Then, they were sending Ellie up to TCU the day after they got back home.

Former member **Brita Jenquin** (who had the nerve to move to New York and leave our choir) reported in early August that she was eight and a half months pregnant -- expecting a boy on Aug. 21. Jerry and Brita are very much looking forward to being parents. She promises to send a photo of the baby when he arrives. They were sweltering there in NY in August with temperatures over 100. And unfortunately, unlike Texas, central air is not a household standard there.

Julia and Michael Adams can both swim a half mile now. It was their goal last summer. This year they got there in the first two weeks. Now they are working on their time. Michael is under fifty minutes, not bad for fifty-five! The built-in flotation devices help, he says. **Jamie and Lauren** are expecting the birth of Philip Michael on the twenty-eighth of August. Julia started sixth grade at City School the last Wednesday in August. Kerry was looking for the best deals on uniforms for Julia.

In July, **Clark and Cathy Hubbs** attended his fish conference in New Orleans. They were elegantly entertained at the Sheraton and feted at the New Orleans Aquarium, which looked completely restored. But they found that what meant the most to their hosts was to take them on a tour through unrestored New Orleans to see topsy-turvy houses still listing sideways, trash and broken boards still waiting for pickup till who knows when? They saw the gutted remains of the house their niece and her husband raised their family in. Right after Katrina, Francie also discovered she had ovarian cancer. But she is reacting remarkably

to a brand new treatment just released. And she and Bob plan to rebuild their home on ten-foot stilts. More power to them!

Former member **Jeri Winter** reports that the month of July came and went in a flash. The first week she helped move her older sister to Milwaukee. Then she got ready for her move to Woodstock... Illinois, that is. This is the first time in Jeri's life she's had a place to herself and so far she's absolutely loving it... but she hasn't been alone all that much, really. Shortly after she moved in, Nicole Harter came up from Austin to visit her for a week. They had a kickin' good time and Jeri was sorry to see her go. Finally, in the last week of July, Jeri moved her younger sister to Madison. She and her sisters now live in a triangle, each an hour and a half from the other. They look forward to being able to hang out more often now. she says, "I love hearing about what's going on down there and miss you all lots." Her new address is Jeri Winter, 1465 Commons Dr. Apt. 2D, Woodstock, IL 60098; phone: 815-990-2660.

Suzanne Bradford has been doing a great deal of traveling--some for work and some spending some time with her dad. He misses her mom a great deal--as they all do. Suzanne traveled with Travis through Arizona, Utah, and Colorado. Her dad joined them for the Arizona portion and they all enjoyed hiking through parts of the Grand Canyon.

John and Carol Burlinson spent several days in the Miami, Florida, area in early August. They did quite a bit of sightseeing in southern Florida (from the Everglades to Palm Beach), plus swimming, museums, theater, eating out...thoroughly enjoyed it. They stayed at the Mayfair Hotel in Coconut Grove--not far from Plymouth Congregational Church where Carol Barrett, Pat Oakes, and Mary Charles Williams were members years ago. Jake stayed home and enjoyed a breather after his Army camp earlier in the summer.

Marilyn Harris, who works at the UT Institute for Cellular and Molecular Biology, has been taking advantage of her proximity to the beautiful outdoor pool complex at Gregory Gym. She is swimming several times a week either at her lunch hour or after work. She is also hard at work trying to establish a faculty/staff singles volunteer organization. She is hoping to get a group together to work on such endeavors as park clean-up, helping the homeless, building handicapped ramps, etc.

Daylia Vaughn and Ernie Muenchau continued Nodie Murphy's wonderful idea of folks giving gifts to the church in the form of their talents. Daylia and Ernie brought the gift of song--a particular type of song. They started writing songs when Ernie was diagnosed with prostate cancer 5 years ago. He was miserable with his treatment, and they were both so depressed. They read a book, GETTING WELL AGAIN by Simonton, and, inspired by it, wrote an anthem which they sang many times--using the idea of "making friends with your treatment." The song (to the melody of "Ode To Joy") and the great work of the folks at M.D. Anderson cured Ernie and they are both "well again!"

Pastor Emeritus **John and Eleanor Towery** enjoyed two family weddings this summer. Eleanor's sister, Betty Tarvin's grandson Joshua (son of Claudia and Jim Whitehead) was married in Round Rock on May 27th and lots of family came from Phoenix where Betty now lives. The second wedding was in June

when Tanya, the daughter of Sally (Towery) and Tommy Johnson, married John Reynolds in Brockton, MA. Eighteen family members flew on Jet Blue from Austin for the gala event. Tanya is a nurse and her husband John owns his own machine shop business. Eleanor was very impressed with the red carpet treatment they got from Jet Blue--excellent wheelchair service, etc. John is looking at possible back surgery soon and Eleanor is having a tough time with her knees and hips. In addition to the weddings, Mary (Towery) and Danny Masters enjoyed a week in Colorado. Their son Ricky has been working on an extra job, at McCallum High School completing a wiring system for the computer system there. We've missed you at church, Ricky! Ches and Maggie Towery have been busy, too, and this fall will be coping with an empty nest. Kristal is a junior at Stephen F. Austin in Nacadoches and K.C. will be a freshman at McMurray College in Abilene. John and Eleanor also stayed busy this summer taking care of their great-grandson Andrew Johnson, son of their granddaughter Pam Johnson.

As of early August, **Whit Bodman's** dad was still recuperating from a mild heart attack and open heart surgery in Maine, hoping to get back home to North Carolina soon. Whit spent several weeks in Maine helping his dad. The time in Maine was originally set for a sailing trip, but his dad suffered the heart attack before they ever left port. Whit is most grateful that the starter on the boat did not work, which delayed their departure, which meant they were able to get to excellent medical care in Bangor.

Marie Scheel was able to go home on August 10th after 7 weeks of recuperation from a fall in June when she broke her hip. After her time in the hospital she went to Healthsouth for a few weeks and then for "finishing school" at West Oaks rehab center. She has progressed from wheelchair to walker to walking with a cane. Keep up the good work, Marie!

Mel and Pat Oakes have had a very busy summer with lots of travels. In June they enjoyed a marvelous 2 weeks in Colorado, one of the weeks being at the YMCA of the Rockies with their 3 daughters, 2 sons-in-law, and two grandchildren. They were also able to spend some time with Richard Jackson and Mary Sinclair and a cousin of Mel's. They had 18 days of company in Austin--friends from Guatemala for 5 days, Beth and Emily and Ethan for 10 days while the Maia Quartet was performing for the Austin Chamber Music Festival, and then Sarah came for 8 days, overlapping with Beth, to attend a high school chemistry teacher's seminar. Both Sarah and Pat then went to North Carolina for the celebration of Pat's dad's 90th birthday. A wonderful time was had by all.

Dave and Sara Ross also had a wonderful time in Colorado--and New Mexico--on a four week trip from late June until late July. While in New Mexico they visited a college roommate of Dave's (who was also part of their wedding party). They tried to make connections with the Jackson/Sinclairs, but they were only able to talk on the phone as the Rosses were camping and it was difficult to make arrangements. Sara nursed plantar fasciitis while on their hikes and has been doing physical therapy to get in shape for more hikes. They particularly enjoyed Rocky Mountain National Park (again) and Great Sand Dunes National Park (again). They were frustrated in their search for Big Springs State Park in

west Texas--only to find out that it has been re-named Big Springs Recreational Area--which they drove right by!.

Nodie and Dennis Murphy had an interesting trip to New Orleans where they stayed with Nodie's sister Julie Nice. Her husband Herb Larsen was in Amsterdam on business which gave them some extra room. Julie was hosting a competitor in the New Orleans International Piano Competition. Jun Asai and her mother came from Oklahoma for the event. Nodie said that even though Jun practiced 8 hours a day, it was a joy to listen to her play--even the scales and arpeggios. They got to hold Nodie's new nephew who was born two months early and is now doing fine. Nodie and Dennis also went to Biloxi to visit with David and Carlin Stephens whose house was destroyed during Katrina last year. They have been staying with Carlin's daughter in Ocean Springs while they decide what to do. Nodie has been so impressed with their resilience and grace. The Murphys continue to be stunned by the magnitude of the Katrina disaster. Rat infested piles of debris and garbage are everywhere. So many historic homes have been destroyed. She also learned that Sophie Newcomb College has closed its doors for good after 120 years of providing advanced education for women.

Our continued prayers for **Jesse Binford** who, in mid-August, was continuing out-patient radiation treatment for a brain tumor. Lolita is there with him and Nancy, Lincoln, Emily and Noah Binford were holding down the fort here in Austin.

In Our Nursery

Melissa McFerrin started working in early August as the child care provider in our nursery on Sunday mornings. During the week, Melissa works at the Austin Community College Children's Lab School. She has substantial experience and school background in early childhood education, and is currently finishing her degree at ACC in Child Care and Development. In addition, she has the life experience of being a mom herself.

At the same time Melissa joined us on Sunday mornings, the nursery was temporarily moved upstairs due to the building renovations. It is located on the second floor in the room we usually use for meetings, adjacent to the Elementary Sunday School classroom. Right now, we are trying to figure out the best way to care for young children during the Fellowship time after church. Our usual easy flow of kids between the nursery and Fellowship Hall has been interrupted, and we will be working on how to keep our younger kids supervised while allowing their families to visit with other church members.

We welcome Melissa, and offer our thanks to Paula Fracasso for encouraging Melissa to work for us on Sunday mornings -- and to Giovanni and Stella for welcoming their teacher.

New Arrivals

Gavin Patrick Firestone
June 15, 2006
8 pounds, 1 ounce
19 ½ inches
Proud Parents: Jim and Cara Firestone

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 7 Marilyn Pickens
- 8 Ava Jean Deisler
- 9 Alessandra Herrera
- 10 Tamyra Isenberg
Bill Phillips
- 13 Seth Murphy
Chris Pinkard
- 20 Earl Cornwell
- 21 Ellen Deisler
- 22 Larbi Sennour
Giovanni Fracasso
Stella Fracasso
- 24 Allison Cole Stutz
Mary Halladay
- 27 Rambie Briggs

FROM THE BOARD OF DEACONS

Welcome back to those who snuck away from Austin during the long hot summer. We hope someone has brought rain back with them.

Here are some things that happened while you were away:

The Deacons again wish to thank all of you who responded so generously to the request for emergency funds to help the Karasi/Bukasa family after Judith's death. Because of your contributions we were able to send Martin \$5,000 as a tangible expression of our love and concern.

In response to a suggestion from Marilyn Vache, the Deacons helped organize a workshop at the end of July with Carla Cheatham. About 15 people "retreated" to the church for a day-long investigation of their personal styles, strengths and gifts.

Individuals in the congregation are a great source of ideas and suggestions of how to help create a closer, more caring congregational community. One suggestion was to make greeting cards available after the service so people could respond in a personal way to the joys and concerns we hear during the service. The Deacons have started the "Card Table" in the Fellowship Hall; a variety of cards are there each Sunday for you to fill out and sign. The cards are sent out with the regular church mail.

Another great suggestion which we have just received is a way to help us all get to know our newer members. For people who would like to participate, this fall we hope to organize small groups mixing old and new members to meet together for dinner. More information on this will be forthcoming, but if you are interested in participating or helping to organize this, please speak to any of the Deacons.

Keep in mind these coming attractions:

Sunday, September 24th we will have a special service to honor those among us who have given a lifetime of service to the church.

Used book, CD, CVC, video sale – hopefully in October; thanks to those who have been cleaning out and bringing in donations.

Picture directory. We hope to begin taking/retaking pictures of all our smiling faces this fall.

Ben White, Dennis Murphy, Jim Howicz, Steve Domingue, Barbara Burnham, Betty Bodman

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.

STEWARDSHIP 2006

Pledge Sunday, Sunday October 29

This Fall, our Stewardship Committee, made up of Sara Ross, Fran Briggs, Lynne Lemley, and Tom VandeStadt, is following up on the Centennial Committee's very successful summer campaign. While our Centennial Committee invited you to pledge time, effort, and resources to support the renovation of *where* we gather as a Christian community, our Stewardship Committee is now inviting you to pledge your time, effort, and resources to *why* we gather as a Christian community (see Tom's reflections on the front page). During the month of October, Board members will be sharing with you their vision for our church's ministry in 2006, and inviting you to pledge your support for this ministry. On Sunday, October 29, the Stewardship Committee will invite you to pledge your financial support for our 2006 budget. If at all possible, please pledge your support on Pledge Sunday as it will help the Budget Committee in its planning for 2006. Thank you for your generosity.

Deadline for October VISITOR — September 18