

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

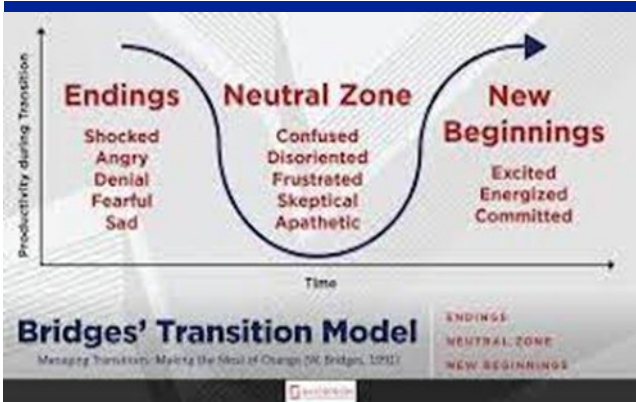
408 West Twenty-third Street, Austin, Texas 78705-5214

(512) 472-2370

E-mail: ucausti@swbell.net

Web site: congregationalchurchofaustin.org

Rev. Amelia Fulbright



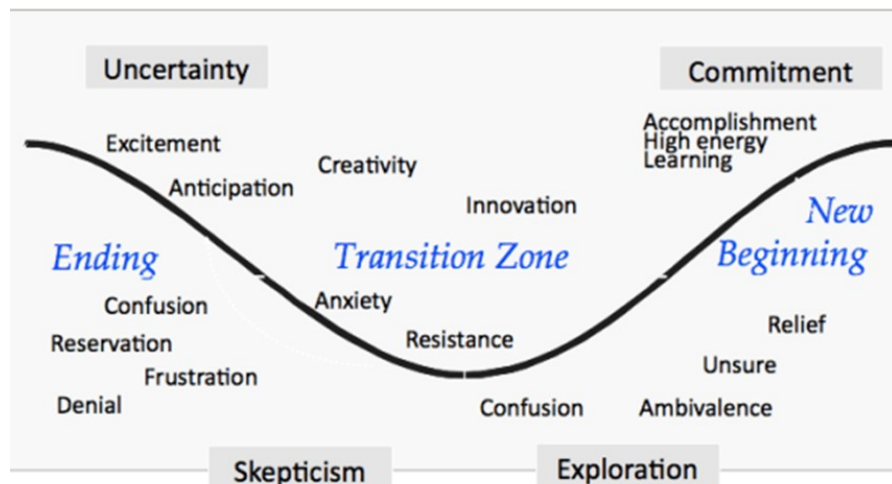
“Churches Fall Apart”

CCA has been through a lot since March 2020. The pandemic has brought so many challenges, including the fact that we have not been able to worship or gather in the ways we did in the before times. Then we said farewell to a long-time beloved pastor, and we are adjusting to life without our beloved **Nodie** leading the music ministry. Our Christian education programs, which were struggling prior to the pandemic, have fallen away. Add to all of this that our buildings continue to age and require more frequent maintenance

and repairs. If it feels like the church is falling apart, that’s because it is. And that’s okay, “normal” even. In fact it is necessary before anything truly new can come.

Let me say more about what I mean. Based on his extensive experience and research, organizational development expert Dr. **William Bridges** has mapped the three basic phases that organizations travel through when the old ways and forms of doing things are dissolving and making way for the new. Many of his primary insights have to do with the “neutral zone,” what he calls a no-man’s land, between an ending and a new beginning. As you can see from the models I’ve included here, the neutral zone can be a difficult period, characterized by confusion, frustration, and skepticism. In the neutral zone, it still is very difficult to envision what the new beginning will entail and what the new version of the organization will be like. In this phase, **Bridges** says it’s actually really important to let some of the old ways die or break or disintegrate in order to make space for the new ways to take shape.

Managing Change: New Beginning Phase



Adapted from *Managing Transitions*, William Bridges

In my best estimation, we here at CCA are somewhere in the first half of the neutral or transition zone. (It's hard to say for sure, partly because we don't know for sure how long this zone will last.) One of the clearest signs we have that we are in the neutral zone is the journey we are on toward setting up a live stream worship experience that eventually will allow us to return to in person worship, while broadcasting the service live. Remember those first two Sundays in August when we tried to live stream the service on YouTube, and it didn't quite work? We had tried to use **Tom's** old laptop and a camera that already belonged to the church, only to discover that these items, which had been extraordinarily useful and productive in the past, would no longer suffice in carrying out our goals. We literally need new ideas and new equipment to move forward.

Rev. **Phil Dodson**, the new conference minister for the South Central Conference of the UCC, suggests that any time churches navigate a major change, they might consider their answers to three key questions:

- 1) What are we giving up?
- 2) What are we keeping?
- 3) What do we get?

When it comes to the live stream, it is true that we are giving up going back to worship exactly as it was before the pandemic. Even when we return to in person worship, we will be returning to a world that never will be quite the same, and in which the opportunity to attend virtual church services will be seen as essential. Although our tech team is working very hard to respect the aesthetics of our sacred space, trying to place cameras and monitors in the most inconspicuous places, this equipment will not be invisible. *It will be a clear sign that times have changed, and it is very important to acknowledge and care gently for the grief that this will bring up for many of us.*

At the same time, we are not giving up everything about worship in the before times! The order of service and the elements included will be very similar to what we knew before, and the sanctuary still holds the memories of countless hymns sung, sermons delivered, prayers lifted, and candles lit. It will remain our sacred space.

And what do we get? We get the opportunity to have a service that is more accessible to all---those particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 who can't attend in person, folks who are not as mobile for any reason, visitors who want to explore the church from a distance before attending in person, and some who may never enter our physical sanctuary but will be blessed by the messages of love and justice we stream out into the universe.

There are some dangers inherent to being in the neutral zone, but on the very bright side, according to **Bridges**, *"The neutral zone is the most naturally creative time the organization and its people will ever have."* I see this paradox playing out as we transition to a new way of worshipping.

Bridges also says that being in the neutral zone is not unlike wandering through the desert for 40 years with the children of Israel. You can expect there will be some bickering, moments of longing to return to the old ways of Egypt, but also the gifts of manna & quail, emerging new forms of worship and ritual, and the cultivation of new leaders. We might even experience the presence of God in miraculous new ways.

May it be so.

Peace,

Pastor **Amelia**

October Visitor Deadline September 21, 2021

Church Leadership

Deacons Chair	Jen Howicz
Outreach Team	open
Moderator	Joy Penticuff
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Jaime Hadley
Christian Education Coordinators	open
Youth Sunday School	open
Clerk	Reuel Nash
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Webmaster	Mel Oakes
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

Heart of Texas Association News
September
by Liz Nash

You are invited to come to the Heart of Texas Association Fall Meeting on Saturday, October 23rd, hosted by the Austin cluster of churches. Because of the evolving COVID situation in Austin, we do not know yet whether we will be meeting online only or at one of our churches in a hybrid format. The time we start will depend on whether we are meeting in person. We will let all of our churches know the plans as soon as a decision is made. Bear with us in this unusual time! We would love to be together in person, but we need to make a determination about whether it will be safe for those who come into the Austin area.

Our sister in Christ, **Billie Watts**, co-pastor of Touchstone Community Church, is retiring from active ministry. Her last Sunday at Touchstone, with a farewell liturgy and with **Billie's** vibrant preaching, is on August 28th. **Billie** committed to the intensive ministry work of starting Touchstone with **Kerry Kirtley** before retiring, and **Billie** is now stepping back to **well deserved** time with her family. Our heartfelt blessings go with her as she transitions into this new phase of life, along with our gratitude for the work she has done. **Kerry** will continue as the pastor of Touchstone, and we continue to offer prayers of support for the community and ministry there.

Amy Grogan, an ordained minister with the Christian Church/Disciples of Christ, is completing the process of gaining standing in the United Church of Christ as an Ordained Ministerial Partner to share her ministry gifts with Touchstone. **Amy** moved to the Boerne area with her husband for family reasons after living for several years in Belgium. She completed her Master of Divinity at Phillips Theological Seminary in a hybrid program and has served in online ministry with the Disciples. Like **Amy**, people living abroad often are in areas where there is little Protestant presence and where few people are part of a church, so her work online has been part of the outreach to others like her and to people who live in places where they would have to travel far to find a church where they feel at home. She has been very active in the Touchstone Community and will be helping as a volunteer in several ministry areas. Our relatively simple process for welcoming ministers from the Disciples reflects the close relationship

between the UCC and the Disciples. We welcome **Amy** to the Heart of Texas Association.

Our Committee on Ministry also has accepted **Brittany Hicks** as Member in Discernment. **Brittany** is a member of Open Cathedral in Leander and a student at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. She served our country in the US Navy for a number of years. We welcome **Brittany** to our discernment process and look forward to walking with her on her ministry journey.

For those who wish to spend a week of service in the marvelous, lifegiving work of Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, MS, I invite you to a work camp there with others from the South Central Conference (if the COVID situation is safe enough for work camps to happen), November 7th to 13th. Our group will need to conform to the COVID safety measures there. Please be in touch with me if you are interested: lizknash@gmail.com. Back Bay Mission is our treasured UCC related outreach to the poorest in Biloxi, with a work camp program of repairing homes, building, and work at Back Bay Mission itself that brings groups in from many places across the country. People of all skill levels are welcome. Come see why we go!

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash, Association Minister

Personals by Pat Oakes

Beth Placek's memorial service was held on Zoom on Saturday, August 21st. About 70 people came to the service which was led by Pastor **Amelia Fulbright**. A moving homily was given by Deacon **CJ Wood**, who also works at Seton. She spent a number of hours over several days visiting with **Beth** while she was in the ICU. **Jen Howicz** read the scripture and violinist/vocalist **Amy Harris** and pianist **Maimy Fong** provided the music, including the postlude (something to dance to): "**Bright Side of the Road**" by **Van Morrison**. After the main part of the service, there was a wonderful time of sharing. Folks from church and folks **Beth** knew from her neighborhood, an early music group, and her work life spoke eloquently about **Beth's** enthusiasm and compassion, her love of dance, reading, and her love of travel. We learned that **Beth** knew the names of all of the children and all of the dogs and cats in her neighborhood. Speakers used adjectives like "vivacious" and "loquacious." We learned about the creative story dances that **Beth** shared with children at their birthday parties —especially from her niece **Marta** and nephew **Louis**. Former Texas State Representative **Elliott Naishtat** spoke of **Beth's** love of the West Austin Democrats and her work on the local level for many candidates. She loved coming to his fundraisers and one time he asked her why she was so delighted with them. Her response, "You don't give any speeches!" **Mark Updegrave**, director of the LBJ Foundation and his wife, **Amy Banner**, told the story of the big freeze this past February when her neighbors were all concerned whether or not she was OK. He and his wife decided to go and take some food to her—and when they got there, they saw that they were not alone—there were many, many footprints in the snow and folks standing at her door to bring her something to eat. She will be missed.

<https://www.patandmeloakes.com/PatandMelOakesFamilySite/CCAHistory/BethPlacek.html>

Liz and **Reuel Nash** have had a busy summer. They went to Montreal for a week and had a glorious time reuniting with **Vivi**, **Ellie**, **Louis**, and his family. **Liz** says that **Vivi** is in high two-year-old mold, testing everyone and being curious about everything - plus she speaks French and English all

mixed together. Most of what comes out is French because that's what's spoken at her daycare (and it's really the primary language). Two-year-olds require some decoding anyway, and her way of speaking added a bit to that. They then headed in a small camper trailer to Arlington, VT, near Manchester, where their daughter **Annie** and **Sooner** live. With their two active dogs and their cat it was quite lively at times. It was a beautiful place, and they were in compact quarters. They headed back to their place in the Berkshires (Mt Washington, MA, where **Liz** is related to a bunch of people in the tiny township) on Monday, Aug. 24th, with **Becky** and friends coming in to celebrate her birthday. It was complicated by hurricane Henri, but other than a good bit of rain they were all fine. **Liz** says it's a relief to be away from the awful COVID in Texas. Some issues there, but it's more sane and safer where they are at this point.



The Nashes home in the Berkshires

William Harris is an 8th grader at Lively Middle School on South Congress formerly Fulmore Middle School (**Zachary Taylor Fulmore** was a member of the Confederate Army) but it was renamed recently for **Sarah Lively** who taught at the old Fulmore School for nearly 50 years. He is enjoying being back in school. His older brother **Alden** has just started at Austin Community College and is looking forward to an exciting year.

Nancy Edison has thought and thought about something newsworthy to report but says not much has been going on. She has been isolating for more than a year and is just now venturing out to be with her Spanish group. Everybody wears a mask and

Personals by Pat Oakes

99% are fully vaccinated. She has gone to the grocery store a few times but is now thinking she will go back to having groceries delivered. Her best news is that she is doing OK.

Lynne Lemley was delighted to introduce her granddaughter **Josette** to the women's bookclub at their last meeting (on Zoom, of course). **Lynne** was babysitting for **Jo** while son **Jeffrey** and daughter-in-law **Rachelle** were working out at the gym!



8/19/21 Josette Lemley made her debut with her grandmother Lynne at book club

Whit Bodman was the guest columnist for the Austin American-Statesman in the weekly religion column on Saturday, August 28th. It celebrates the importance of the vote in the Congregational tradition. You will be inspired. Here is the link https://statesman-tx-app.newsmemory.com/?publink=0e6136bc5_1345eb0

Pam Tucker says, "**Harrison** and I went to Cuchara and climbed the East Spanish Peak. This is the first time that one of the kids has been faster than me going up to the top! This is good news, because **Harrison** has been working out and doing drills to get better at basketball, so he can make the Anderson team. He also got to see a bear in our yard in CO. **Harrison** and I are also trying to learn how to wake surf behind a boat in Lake Travis. We are beginners, but it is really fun. **Savanna** has spent the summer playing and working out for rowing in the fall. She went to Hawaii for a little over a week with a friend (**Kaija**) from the University of Washington. They made plans last spring and were able to get an incredible deal for flight and hotel."



7/8/21 Harrison and his mom Pam Tucker climbed East Spanish Peak near Cuchara



7/8/21 Pam and Harrison spotted a large bear in their yard in Colorado



8/21 Savanna T. and her friend Kaija enjoying the sun in beautiful Hawaii

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes



8/21 Pam Tucker wake surfing behind a boat on Lake Travis



About the year 2000 Dr. Minerva Miles with her and Don Miles' daughter Juliette Ritzman at a stopover at Ft. Hood about 20 years ago



8/21 Harrison Tucker wake surfing on Lake Travis

Don Miles reports, "The Afghanistan situation hit close to home for my daughter, **Juliette Ritzman**, and her oldest son, **Austin Ritzman**. **Juliette's** helicopter unit was stationed in Kuwait from January to September, 2020, on standby in case they were needed in Afghanistan. They were never called up, but as I watched the TV images of helicopters flying over Kabul I was relieved that she's back home safe and sound. Her son, **Austin**, was deployed twice to Afghanistan and once to Iraq during the past few years. He's now serving as an intern at the Pentagon which will result in a master's degree and a promotion when he's finished with that assignment.

Keep **Beth Gleason** in your prayers. She was delighted to graduate on August 20th from chaplaincy school in San Antonio. **Beth** was looking at interim ministry, considering going to Colorado or Maine, but her breast cancer diagnosis and surgery changed that. She recently made the trek safely to Maine with her two dogs, Flower and Milagro, and has gone to Brunswick, ME, to stay with her sister while getting further treatment.

Bethany Leach has this update, "**Hattie** and **Nicholas** attend Hornsby-Dunlap Elementary in the Del Valle District. **Hattie** is in the fourth grade and is continuing to enjoy school. Last year virtual school was challenging for her, but books and stories were a big encouragement to her (and all that reading paid off...she got the highest score of her class on the reading STAAR test at the end of the year). **Nicholas** is in first grade and enjoys reading, writing stories and building Lego's. **Zella** is attending preschool at the UT Child Development Center this year, and is very excited about starting school. **Nathan** graduated with his Ph.D. over the summer, and he has a one-year position as a Postdoctoral Researcher Fellow at UT.

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

He is headed to Greece in September for a few weeks and will be helping to lead a group of students to Turkey in May. He is hosting a conference (along with a Haitian scholar) on Haiti and Religious Studies in the spring. I am working for Literacy First as a Bilingual Early Literacy Tutor (helping little kids learn to read in Spanish). We are excited for our year here, in spite of everything. **Nathan** is on the job market for positions starting next fall, and if a job doesn't take us elsewhere, then we are planning to move to the Kansas City area to be closer to our families."

Debby Kohrt, a retired nurse, shares that she had a wonderful time with the Cabo San Lucas Smiles International Foundation Mission for one week in August. It was especially good to be there as the mission was canceled last year because of the pandemic. **Debby** has participated in the program for several years. Imagine how devastating it must have been to the families there to learn they had to wait another year to have their child treated. This mission was different with lighter days of surgery mainly because many of the children and their families had Covid. It still was a great mission as you can see from the picture of the little girl with a bilateral full cleft lip. **Debby** said that seeing the joy on the face of the child's mother after the surgery was so uplifting. It truly was a miraculous sight to see the outcome performed by their skilled maxillofacial surgeons. They are planning another mission in February.



August 2021 The staff of the Smiles International mission in Cabo San Lucas—Debby is in the front row, 3rd from the left



August 2021 What a wonderful transformation for this little girl— thanks to Smiles International



August 2021 Preoperative photo of a precious little girl with a bilateral cleft lip

Faye Dierksen says, "We have had a few trips with **Deek** this summer! In July we were back in Nebraska and South Dakota. We were in Chadron, NE, for **Andy's** 20th high school reunion which was a lot of fun and then in South Dakota to see my family. Both of my brothers and their partners, **Jack & Peggy** and **Charles & Kristen**, were able to be there which was lovely because it had been 2 years since we had all seen each other! When we got back from our trip **Deek** started walking and is toddling all over the place now! We're looking forward to staying home for a little while now."

Photos on next page

Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes



7/21 South Dakota clearly agrees with Deek and his parents
Andy and Faye Dierksen



7/21 Darling Deek Dierksen

Andrea Low has this update. "Unfortunately, **Paul** and I cancelled our trip to Honolulu for my dad's 90th birthday party and to Hilo for **Paul's** 80th birthday party due to the COVID surge in Hawaii and Central Texas this month. My brother reported that the much smaller gathering for Dad was still festive with Dad sharing a birthday cake with my 2-year-old grandnephew. They also informed me that the food I selected was excellent! I began a new job as the Attorney for the Committee on Disciplinary Rules and Referenda at the State Bar of Texas on August 16, 2021. In more pandemic weirdness, computer equipment was wheeled out to the parking lot for me to pick up and I have met the committee members and other staff all by Teams and Zoom. I am told that my office faces west over Texas Chili Parlor and toward the DoubleTree Hotel. In this new capacity, I

will provide legal counsel for the committee that initiates proposals for new or amended rules of professional conduct and disciplinary procedure that govern lawyers in Texas. We were able to take a couple of short trips earlier this summer. At the end of May, we traveled to Indiana to see the Indy 500 and the emergence of the Brood X 17-year periodical cicadas. In July, we took a Greyhound bus to Corpus Christi to see Selena and the Gulf of Mexico.



7/9/21 Paul Toyozaki took this photo of Andrea Low when they visited Padre Island National Seashore this summer



7/9/21 Andrea and Paul also enjoyed the Selena Museum
in Corpus Christi

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

Mel and **Pat Oakes** enjoyed a great visit from daughter **Beth** and granddaughter **Emily** who were in town for nearly a week. A highlight of the visit was going to the immersive **van Gogh** art/light show at the Circuit of the Americas. Another was going to the Salt Lick for barbecue. **Emily** has now been delivered to Smith College by her parents as she begins her sophomore year (Hurricane Henri enlivened the whole weekend). Because of the pandemic, she took a gap year, working from home as an intern with the Iowa Writer's Workshop. Grandson **Ethan** will be heading for Stanford in mid-September as an entering freshman. **Beth** and **Eugene** will be adjusting to a very empty nest as both kids (who had been working and studying from home for the past year and a half) will be gone and just a month ago they had to put down their beloved dog Ginger.

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

As we are thinking about how to get started back up (maybe) to in-person services and working to improve our on-line services, perhaps you would enjoy looking at some of the advertisements that we put in the newspaper years ago to help folks find us. One example is on this page, but Mel found many more to see on the link below.


<https://www.patandmeloakes.com/PatandMelOakesFamilySite/CCAHistory/ChurchAds.html>

8-83

IS THIS THE CHURCH YOU'RE LOOKING FOR?

It holds its doors open to all. Interracial in membership since its founding, the church building was a place where groups welcome nowhere else could meet.

**The Congregational Church
of Austin**
408 W. 23rd Street
472-2370
(See map on page C10)

The seal of the United Church of Christ is circular. It features a central cross with a crown on top and a globe at the base. The words "UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST" are written around the top inner edge, and "THEY MAY ALL BE ONE" is written around the bottom inner edge. There are small stars on either side of the globe.