

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt

Rev. John Towery, Pastor Emeritus

In their book, *The Meaning of Jesus*, two well-known New Testament scholars, **Marcus Borg** and **N.T. Wright**, draw on their scholarly expertise to reflect on, what else...the meaning of Jesus. Their book is particularly interesting because while Borg and Wright are both respected New Testament scholars and devout Christians, they hold different beliefs about Jesus and articulate their faith in different ways. One of the issues they address in their book is the resurrection of Jesus and the meaning of Easter.

Wright tells us that within first-century Judaism, people held a variety of beliefs concerning life after death. Among them was a particular belief regarding the resurrection of the dead. Resurrection didn't simply mean life after death, nor did it mean life after death as a disembodied spirit or ghost. Resurrection meant life after death in an *embodied form*. But the resurrected body was not simply the old dead body resuscitated. It was a transformed body, a new body. The Pharisees in particular held a well-developed belief in the bodily resurrection of the righteous and the wise in the new age to come — in the messianic age or the kingdom of God.

Wright claims that as first-century Jews, the followers of Jesus wouldn't have made the claim that Jesus was resurrected from the dead if they hadn't encountered him in embodied form after his death. If they had encountered him as a ghost, apparition, or spiritual presence they would have said so because all these forms were consistent with Jewish belief and they had words to describe him as a ghost, apparition, or spiritual presence. But they didn't. They said he was resurrected in bodily form from the dead.

And it was precisely their encounter with the resurrected Jesus in bodily form that prevented the Jesus movement from disappearing. The encounter with the resurrected Jesus in bodily form was so powerfully life-transforming that it kept the Jesus movement together and served as an indisputable sign that the new age was indeed breaking in upon them. So, on the question of the resurrection, **Wright** himself believes that Jesus was literally resurrected in bodily form. If not, he argues, first-century Jews wouldn't have used the phrase "*resurrected* from the dead," and the Christian church would not exist today.

Borg asks his famous question: if a video camera had been set up in the tomb in which Jesus' dead body was placed, would we have actual footage of the resurrection of Jesus' body? Would we see his dead body undergo some kind of transformation? Would we see the stone roll away from the tomb? Would we see the resurrected Jesus, with his new body, disappear from the tomb? **Borg** strongly suspects we would not.

While acknowledging that resurrection had the specific meaning of a body rising from the dead in a transformed state, **Borg** argues that we need not take this claim literally, just as we need not take all the other claims in the New Testament literally. Not all Christians take literally the claim that Jesus' mother was a virgin, that Jesus raised a man named Lazarus or a twelve-year-old girl from the dead, or that his disciples watched him ascend bodily into heaven. All of these stories use powerful imagery and symbolism to make certain faith claims about Jesus, but they need not be taken literally.

Borg believes the followers of Jesus did continue to experience Jesus' living presence in their midst after his death on the cross. Not in some embodied form, but as a living spirit that was so deeply and powerfully felt, so unquestionably life-transforming, that it kept the Jesus community together even after Jesus died. And by continuing to experience his living presence in their midst, the followers of Jesus became convinced, if they weren't convinced already, that Jesus truly was the one sent by God to forgive them, the one through whom God liberated the world from the power of evil, and the one who was ushering in the new age of God's kingdom.

Easter Sunday

Borg believes the meaning of Easter is not that God raised Jesus bodily from the dead, but that Jesus simply lives and will always live with those who seek to follow him and be his disciples. And through faith in him—by following him and being transformed by him, by gathering together in community to break his bread—Christians can recognize and celebrate his presence in their midst, and they can continue his ministry and message in this world. So, unlike Wright, Borg doesn't believe Jesus was raised bodily from the dead, but he does have faith that Jesus lives.

So, here we have two well-known New Testament scholars and faithful Christians disagreeing on what really happened on Easter. Was Jesus literally raised in bodily form from the dead? One says yes while the other says no. But both say, *Jesus lives!*

Their different views highlight the diversity within Christianity. In fact, that's what their conversation was meant to highlight—people who are devout Christians, and who can claim a certain expertise in interpreting the Bible, can hold different beliefs regarding the central faith claims of Christianity. What's important is not that each comes to an agreement on whether the body of Jesus was literally resurrected, what's important is that each can find something powerful and life-transforming in the meaning of Easter and affirm that Jesus Christ lives.

Regardless of our personal beliefs regarding the bodily resurrection of Jesus, may we find something powerful and life-transforming in the meaning of **Easter**, and may we affirm with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength that Jesus lives!

Tom

The Easter Sunday service was full to the brim—over 100 folks were there to enjoy the beautiful and meaningful service and sermon. The service was followed by an Easter egg hunt for the children and a delicious Easter brunch. Many thanks to all the folks who helped with food, set-up, and clean-up, including Betty Bodman, Florence Jordan, Pat Oakes, Tommie Pinkard, Emily Garrison, Sara Ross, Cathy Hubbs, Fran Briggs, Elizabeth Freese, Lynn Lemley, Katie Lemley, and Jaime Hadley.



Easter Sunday, and the flowered cross—April 24, 2011. The choir sang a wonderful anthem. (Back row) Don Miles, Whit Bodman, Dennis Murphy (Bill Mueller hidden behind Dennis), Rambi Briggs, Norma Hawes, Sara Ross, Joe McMillan; (Front row) Betty Phillips, Cathy Hubbs, Fran Briggs, Nodie Murphy (directing), and Barbara Burnham.

Silent Auction Items For Youth Trip

Please plan to participate on May 22 in whatever way you can, by donating items to the Silent Auction or by bidding on items that others donate. (Designated donations to the church for the **Youth Group Mission Trip** are also welcome). Any excess funds raised will fund future Mission Trips. We need never or gently used items of high quality and in good condition, including your own homemade crafts.

To donate, please bring your items to church on Sunday, May 8 or 15 and e-mail Robin Chapman at alexrobin-tom@sbcglobal.net with a general description of the item, what you would estimate the approximate range might be for its expected value, and whether you want to set a minimum bid below which you prefer that the item be returned to you. Items of any value are welcome. We hope to see you there on **May 22!**

CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Trustees Chair	Jaime Hadley
Deacons Chair	Joe McMillan
Christian Outreach Chair	Bill Beardall
Moderator	Reuel Nash
Treasurer	David Ross
Financial Secretary	Pam Tucker
Clerk	Betty Bodman
Historian	Whit Bodman
Webmistress	Sara Ross

Congregational Church of Austin
110th Anniversary
April 3, 2011



The church celebrated its 110th birthday the first weekend in April. The occasion was noted by taking a group picture in front of the church on April 3, 2011. At the 100th celebration 10 years ago, we forgot to take a picture, an oversight that has now been remedied.

Back row (left to right) Martin and Emily Garrison, Liz Nash, Florence Jordan, Christy Kuhner, Betty (Jordan) Bodman, Jim and Mona Maser, Nancy Brown, Don Brown, Doyal and Tommie Pinkard, Sharon Brown, Cecile Adam, Bob Brander and Barbara Sterling, Jo Jensen, Jeffrey Lemley, Allison Edwards, Bill Campbell, Mrs. Li and Victoria Li, Robin Chapman and Tom VandeStadt (pastor), Don Miles, Joe McMillan, Barbara Burnham in front of Joe, Nodie Murphy (choir director) next to Barbara, Bill and Joan Mueller (on their 55th wedding anniversary), next to Joan, Chester Rosson, Sara Ross in front of Chester, behind Joan, Dennis Murphy, behind Dennis, Steve Domingue and Norma Hawes, Beth Gleason, Katie Lemley, Alex VandeStadtd, Bill Beardall, Cameron Goff, John Goff and Gail Christeson, Megan Goff, Nancy Edison (designer of the garden).

Front row (left to right) Dave Ross (photographer), George Carruthers and Marilyn Gaddis (up from San Marcos), Pam Tucker with her children Harrison and Savanna and Savanna's friend Sydney Brown behind Harrison, Jesse and Lolita Binford, Eliot and Felicia Scott and their children Skye and Sterling, Shannon and Jason Quisenberry and their twins Juliet and Scarlett, Marilyn Vaché, Lynn Lemley, Cathy Hubbs (in choir robe), Ranae Beeker, Geneva Ross, Colin Ferguson (with cello), Jonathan Geer (pianist), Andy Strietelmeier (violinist), Ben White, Reuel Nash, Whit Bodman, Jaime Hadley, Elizabeth Freese and Talley Summerlin (next to Jaime) with daughters Vivian and Rose. Front row: Kevin and Rachel Dietz with children Isabella, John, and Francesca, Robynne Heymans and Emily Everidge (teachers). Andria Miner and Alan Lippert with Julianne, Doris Williams, Pat and Mel Oakes, Vic and Betty Appel.

Regular attendees who are not in the picture:

Matt Blackstock, Florence Castle, Beth Placek, Greg Futch, Jen, Jim, Emily, and Tess Howicz, Fran and Rambie Briggs, Fred and Carol Scott, George Hetrick, Becky Nash, Bill and Betty Phillips.

PERSONALS

by Pat Oakes

Florence Castle had a tough time in late March and April with bronchitis and intestinal troubles. She was hospitalized briefly and then sent to rehab at The Summit in Westlake Hills near Zilker Park where she is doing well. She loves to have visitors, so feel free to drop by if you are in the neighborhood. It looks like she will be there until mid-May anyway. At this writing it is not clear whether she will be going back home or into an assisted living facility. She will celebrate her 95th birthday on May 13. Do send birthday greetings to her at her home address: Ms. Florence Castle, 2901 Del Curto Rd, Austin, TX 78704-4821.



The choir leading the Palm Sunday procession: Rambie Briggs, Connie Boynton, Cathy Hubbs, Sara Ross, Norma Hawes, Joe McMillan.



Palm Sunday procession: (from left) Jim and Mona Maser, Michael, Stella (hidden) and Giovanni Fracasso, Felicia Scott, Lynn Lemley.



Palm Sunday procession Robin Chapman, Connie Boynton's daughter, Fred and Carol Scott, Don and Sharon Brown, Bob Garrett and his wife Jo Jensen.

Carol and Fred Scott were delighted to be in church on Palm Sunday. Carol is recuperating well from her recent back surgery and is glad to be getting back into the swing of things. They enjoyed being a part of the wonderful Palm Sunday procession.

Palm Sunday was a lovely, clear, cool, and breezy day. What should have been an ordinary Palm Sunday turned very dangerous for the family of Paula (Briggs) and Michael Fracasso and their children Giovanni and Stella. The children had spent the night with their grandparents Fran and Rambie and came to church with them. Michael showed up in time for the Palm Sunday procession and then took the children to their lacrosse game. About 2 in the afternoon, Paula was working at home (near the Y at Oak Hill) when she suddenly realized that the color of light in the house had changed. She looked outside and saw a raging fire coming toward their house. She dashed for her computer, her hard drive, and Michael's guitars and fled in her car.

They did not learn until late Sunday evening that their house had survived, but that their neighbor's home had burned to the ground. Paula and Michael's beautiful backyard, fence, and several storage sheds (containing some instruments, tools, and Michael's CD inventory) were destroyed. The insurance people were being very helpful and were arranging for the carpets and air ducts in the house to be cleaned and all of the clothing to be laundered. Stella was most relieved that her dolly was OK. They stayed with friends the first few nights after the fire and Giovanni and Stella stayed with Fran and Rambie over the Easter holiday. The fire was accidentally started by a homeless man (who has been charged with arson) who was cooking eggs over an open fire. He left to go to the nearby

convenience store to get a beer--and when he came back, the fire had taken off. Rambie notes that the neighborhood had worried for years about several homeless encampments in the area.

Robin Rosson and Julia Ross have a little bit of news--they are expecting a daughter in September! Julia reports that she is feeling a lot better now that she is well into the second trimester. The future grandparents are ecstatic (Barbara Burnham, Chester Rosson, and Jim and Enid Ross)--especially since they correctly predicted a girl!

Matt Blackstock's aunt, his dad's sister Mildred Faye Of-field died on April 14 at the age of 91. She was the youngest of 11 children, (starting with Matt's dad, who was born in 1899, and ending with her). She was only 6 years older than Matt. Matt and his brother David were with her and her family at the time of her passing, understandably a stressful and exhausting experience. Having spent a good part of his early life with his Blackstock family in the Weatherford area and having known so many of his relatives extremely well, Matt's loss is all the larger for having been so close to them. It means goodbye to that generation of his family, making it a milestone event.

On Sunday evening, April 10, **Austin Interfaith** held an "accountability session" for city council candidates and other public officials at St. Ignatius Martyr Catholic Church in South Austin. A number of folks from our church were in attendance, including **Kevin Dietz, Cathy Hubbs, Robin Chapman, Doris Williams, Martin and Emily Garrison, Marilyn Vaché, Whit Bodman, Bill Beardall, and Tom VandeStadt**. The accountability session was attended by more than 800 members from Austin Interfaith congregations and organizations, representing a diverse cross-section of Austin. They assembled with all of the city council candidates, the Austin School Board president, and **Senator Kirk Watson** to hear each of the candidates and officials declare whether or not they would commit to work with Austin Interfaith on seven justice initiatives developed by Austin Interfaith congregations and members:

- (1) worker safety training on city-subsidized construction projects;
- (2) a new city initiative to address homelessness;
- (3) continued commitment to Austin's policy of public safety enforcement that includes immigrant communities and that does not divert police resources into enforcement of federal immigration laws;
- (4) allowing Austin's under-paid taxi drivers to move their taxi permits to whatever cab companies treat them most fairly;
- (5) requiring that a basic living wage be paid to workers by companies that receive city-taxpayer-subsidies to locate in Austin;
- (6) reforming the city's overbroad no-lobbying rule so it doesn't unduly restrict citizen groups like Austin Inter-

faith from urging city council member so support job-training programs funded by the city; and

- (7) raising new revenue for public schools, dedicated to putting more teachers in the classroom and averting unnecessary school closures. Playing a leadership role in the accountability session were Bill Beardall who worked on the planning committee and conducted the opening briefing to kick off the assembly and Tom VandeStadt who concluded the assembly with a notably stirring prayer.

Beth Placek enjoyed her annual trek to Washington, D.C., for an art and dance extravaganza. She was most relieved that the government shut-down did not materialize, as that would have closed down the dance venue. She especially enjoyed a trip to the National Gallery of Art where she looked with new meaning at one of her favorite paintings, "St. George and the Dragon," after reading a book she found by Joanna Pitman, *The Dragon's Trail, the Biography of Raphael's Masterpiece*.

Victoria Li and Bill Campbell enjoyed a month-long visit with Victoria's mom **Shun Shan Li**. Mrs. Li was visiting from California. She stepped right in and helped with the friendship dinner which was held at Victoria and Bill's home on April 9. She also got to visit with granddaughter **Lillian Hsu**, a student at St. Stephen's.

There was a wonderful gathering on April 16, 2011, of the **Towery clan** on the occasion of the marriage of **John** (Pastor Emeritus of this church) and **Eleanor's** grandson **KC (Kenneth Chesley) Towery**, son of **Maggie and Ches**



The Towery clan at KC and Kendra's wedding on April 6, 2011. Villa St. Clair, Austin. Front Row: John (pastor emeritus of Congregational Church of Austin) and Eleanor Towery. Back row: Danny Masters, John Reynolds, Mary Masters, Tanya (Johnson) Reynolds (expecting in August), Ches and Maggie Towery (parents of the groom), Kendra (Reynolds) and KC Towery, Kystal Towery, Drew Johnson, Tommy and Sally Johnson, Pam Johnson (mother of Drew), Monica, Agnes and Ricky Masters.

Towery, to **Kendra Ann Reynolds**, daughter of **Kenneth and Karen Reynolds**. KC and Kendra have been sweethearts since high school and both have now graduated from college. KC is working in banking and finance with IBC Bank and Kendra is working as permanent sub in the area and is hoping to have a full-time faculty position in the fall. The wedding was at the Villa St. Clair in Austin, a brand-new venue off of State Highway 130.

Nodie and Dennis Murphy and **Mel and Pat Oakes** had a wonderful afternoon of music in San Antonio when they drove down to attend a performance of the UTSA Concert Choir "Music of Three Continents" conducted by our for-



mer church pianist **Aaron Carter-Cohn**. (see photo above) Aaron, who is working on a master's in conducting at UTSA, led three choirs: The Texas Children's Choir, the John Jay High School Chamber Singers, and the UTSA choir in numbers from Europe, North America, and Africa. Especially noteworthy was Aaron's beautiful composition, "Poems of Rodney Gomez."



Garry Cole, Dennis Murphy, Pat Oakes, Nodie Murphy, Judy Cole

After the concert and a good visit with Aaron, the Murphys and the Oakeses enjoyed a delicious dinner at the home of **Garry and Judy Cole**, longtime members and friends of our church.

Carol Barrett sent the photograph below for some of the old timers at the church. She and her husband Gary are delighted to announce that **Craig Barrett** (who grew up in this church) and **Delan Kai** were married at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center on April 15th, 2011.



Delan and Craig are residents of the Zilker neighborhood in Austin and continue to work on their house on Treadwell. Both are working in the high-tech field. Craig is doing marketing for a start-up; Delan is developing iPhone applications. Carol is serving as Moderator of the San Marino (California) UCC and looking forward to the annual conference in June.

Sarah Kirch applied and was accepted into ASFA's (Alabama School of Fine Arts) visual arts program. Although already enrolled at the school, she had to go through the same process as other applicants: submission of a portfolio and reference letters from teachers, an interview, and an audition. The latter consisted on being given a Sharpie and one piece of paper and presented with a still life arrangement to draw. Then there was a surprise: an additional piece of paper and "Now draw the person sitting next to you." As for her mom Lisa, an art historian, she is teaching one survey and three upper-division courses (4/4 is normal at the University of Northern Alabama, but it doesn't usually involve 4 preps). She is also preparing an article for publication. It's been accepted by

cont. on p. 7

Brazos Association News

by Liz Nash

This winter and spring, we have welcomed two new ministers into our Association along with one student in care in preparation for ordained ministry. The Church and Ministry Committee received transfers of ministerial standing for **Rev. Stephanie Spitzer-Hanks** and **Rev. Judy Brandon** at its past two meetings. Stephanie comes to us from the North Texas Association, where she served St. Paul's UCC in Gerald, Texas (near Waco), then took time with her husband to study in the Netherlands before moving to Austin. She is currently doing chaplaincy training at Seton Medical Center in Austin. Judy was ordained at The Community Church of Durham in Durham, New Hampshire on March 20, 2011. She completed her Master of Divinity at Andover Newton Theological School and now works as a chaplain at Hospice Austin. Both Stephanie and Judy are members of United Christian in Austin. Our newest in care student is **Scott Spence**, a student at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and a member of United Christian Church in Austin. Scott is a year away from graduation. We welcome Stephanie, Judy, and Scott to the Brazos Association and hope you have a chance to meet them.

We also have incoming Association officers and committee members, as well as folks we appreciate who will continue in their present positions. **Rev. Dr. Jerry Carpenter** (Weimar UCC) and **Rev. Karl Tewold** (Faith UCC, Bryan) will be nominated at our Spring Brazos Association Meeting on May 1st at St. John's, Burton to become, respectively, the Moderator of the Brazos Association and an incoming member of our Church and Ministry Committee (replacing Jerry as one of the committee members). **Larry Winkelmann** and **Cindy Miller** (both from St. John's, Burton) will continue as our Association Treasurer and Secretary.

As of the time of this writing, we are still working on finding a nominee for the Association Vice-Moderator. We will welcome **Anne Wehrly** (Friends Congregational, College Station) as our new Church and Ministry Committee chair. Anne already serves on that committee, which has elected her as the chair to replace **Jerry Carpenter**. Other continuing Church and Ministry Committee members include **Rev. Glen Schoeneberg** (St. John's, Burton), **Pastor John Boydston** (Evangelical, Lyons), **Ronney Knesek** (Evangelical, Lyons), and **Glenn Horndt** (Weimar UCC).

Our South Central Conference Annual Meeting will be held this year at the Hilton in Clear Lake, hosted by the Houston Association, on June 3 - 5. The theme is

and Ministry Committee members include **Rev. Glen Schoeneberg** (St. John's, Burton), **Pastor John Boydston** (Evangelical, Lyons), **Ronney Knesek** (Evangelical, Lyons), and **Glenn Horndt** (Weimar UCC).

Our **South Central Conference Annual Meeting** will be held this year at the Hilton in Clear Lake, hosted by the Houston Association, June 3 - 5. The theme is "**Watering Our Spirits: Refresh-Renew-Recommit.**" The keynote speaker is **Bishop Yvette Flunder**, Senior Pastor of City of Refuge UCC in San Francisco, an insightful and inspiring preacher as well as a terrific gospel singer. I hope many of you can join us.

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash
Brazos Association Minister

PERSONALS

continued from p. 6

the *Journal of the History of Collections*, a good place for an article on antiquities collecting. When that's done, she will finish the other manuscript that's coming out. That one's pretty different: it's about the publicity surrounding an axe murder. No, it's not Lizzie Borden but is about one brother who killed another because he wouldn't recant his Protestantism (in 1546 in Germany).

Michael Adams reports that Kerry is still working at the IRS and Julia is still at Huntington-Surrey. Michael, a nurse, is still doing a home ventilator case. However, Kerry fell and fractured her fibula in early April. She thought it was just a sprain, but the doctor insisted that X-rays don't lie, so she is in an air cast, which sounds light, but the stuff that holds all that air is not. Also, she can't drive with that cast on her right leg, so she rides to Michael's case with him and then takes a taxi the rest of the way. Kerry ought to be furloughed and Julia will be out of school for the summer in about six weeks, when the cast also comes off.

Do you have some news to share with CCA members and friends? We'd love to hear about your travels to far-off places this summer, and always enjoy hearing the latest news about graduations, weddings and special events and gatherings. Send your news to Pat Oakes at oakes@mail.utexas.edu.

The Congregational Church of Austin
408 West 23rd Street
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Return Service Requested

Deadline for June VISITOR — May 21

**We are changing the way we do refreshments
for Fellowship Hour**



Refreshments

We need volunteers to sign up for coffee hour each Sunday. Coffee, cream, sugar, and punch fixings are already on hand. Refreshments can be as simple or as elaborate as you like--and we encourage folks to share responsibilities. One unit can bring the food--another can clean up--whatever works for you. There is a sign up sheet in the Fellowship Hall or you can call and schedule with Kathy Whatley, our new office manager. If you have questions about what to bring, contact Pat Oakes or Tommie Pinkard.