

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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

(512) 472-2370 Fax: (512) 472-1175

e-mail: ucausti@SWBell.net Web site: congregational.faithweb.com

Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt

Rev. John Towery, Pastor Emeritus

Y

ou can't do what you want till you know what you're doing.

Moshe Feldenkrais

A shared vision is not an idea. It is not even an important idea such as freedom. It is, rather, a force of impressive power. It may be inspired by an idea, but once it goes further—if it is compelling enough to acquire the support of more than one person—then it is no longer an abstraction. It is palpable. People begin to see it as if it exists. Few, if any, forces in human affairs are as powerful as shared vision.

Robert Seng

If you want to build a ship, don't herd people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.

Antoine de Saint Exupery

At our most recent congregational meeting, we voted to remain in the “convergence discussion” with several other area churches. These other churches include University Baptist Church, Highland Park Baptist Church, the Sanctuary, and Journey Imperfect Faith Community.

We also decided to contribute financially to secure the services of a church and business consultant named Mike Murray.

At this early stage of the game, the outcome of the “convergence discussion” is still wide open. Anything from no action to churches cooperating more closely to the merger of two or more churches may eventually come from this discussion.

Not to be confused with the “convergence discussion” is our church’s upcoming vision process, which we’ll begin this September. We currently have a committee that’s been hard at work for several months planning a rather in-depth process of discerning who we currently are and our vision for the future. The Committee includes Reuel Nash, Sharon Brown, Whit Bodman, Bill Mueller, Nancy Edison, Martin Garrison, and me—folks who offered to serve on this committee when Reuel issued the call for volunteers several months ago.

The vision process will unfold in two stages. The first stage will use a survey and house meetings to help us discern who we are and what we’re doing as a church, as well as what we think and how we feel about who we are and what we’re doing. This first stage will cover everything from worship to outreach, stewardship to Christian education, building us-age to fellowship.

We’ll also take time to discern the varieties of “spiritual types” in our church so we can see the extent to which we’re head-oriented or heart-oriented in our spirituality, how many folks are drawn to silence and contemplation, how many are drawn to artistic pursuits or action in the world, and so on and so forth. This first stage is a very important one. As therapist Moshe Feldenkrais put it, “You can’t do what you want till you know what you’re doing.”

Continued on page 2

After we complete the first stage and have a clear sense of who we are and what we're doing, we'll embark on the second stage in the Spring and ask ourselves who we want to be and what we want to do over the next five to ten years. Toward what kind of future ministry should we focus our time, talent, energy, and money? Or to paraphrase Robert Seng and Antoine de Saint Exupery, toward what kind of vision is our longing and passion driving us?

I'm excited about our vision process. I hope all of you participate in it, enjoy it, and learn from it. And thanks to the vision committee for all of your hard work!

Tom

YOU ARE INVITED!

Who: Members and Friends of all Austin-area United Church of Christ and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregations.

What: Potluck Supper (bring a dish to share) and Conversation with **Bishop Samuel Mkhonta** and **Mrs. Ntombikayise Mkhonta** of the Kukhany'okusha Zion Church (KZC) of Swaziland.

When: 6:30-8:00 PM, Wednesday, July 20, 2011.

Where: United Christian Church, 3500 W. Parmer Ln., Austin, Texas 78727, 512-218-8110, www.uccaustin.org

More Information: The Kukhany'okusha Zion Church (KZC) of Swaziland is a partner church of Global Ministries, the shared international witness of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Swaziland is a small nation in Southern Africa. The country has about a million people. At least 60 percent of its population lives on less than \$1.25 per day. The nation has a 40 % unemployment rate. About 33 % of its people are infected with HIV/AIDS – the highest infection rate in the world. Their 32-year life expectancy is the lowest in the world. Approximately 39 % of the population is under the age of 14. The main KZC congregation is located in Manzini, Swaziland, with 33 KZC satellite churches across the country. Global Ministries has had a partnership with KZC since 1982. Bishop and Mrs. Mkhonta are diligent and personable leaders of the KZC church. They are in the United States to attend the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and are visiting Austin thanks to the generosity of the Disciples Women's Ministry of Round Rock Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The Mkhontas are being hosted by Sandy and Dan Owen, who served as Global Ministries missionaries in Swaziland.

RSVP: If you plan to attend this potluck supper and conversation, please reply to United Christian Church at church@uccaustin.org or 512-218-8110. All are welcome.

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 |
| Web mistress | Sara Ross |

SEMINARY STUDENT REPORT

Beth Gleason, one of our **In Care seminary students** has been serving as an intern at *Church of the Savior* in Cedar Park since February. She co-led a devotion class during the season of Lent, taught a Bible study class on the last six books of the Bible, and has preached several times.

Beth will also lead the annual *CCA Youth Mission Trip*, July 2 – July 9, 2011 and plans, along with **Liz Nash**, a second mission trip to El Salvador in January, with hopes to include a larger number of youth and adult participants. Beth will finish her internship at *Church of the Savior* in late August and looks forward to coming home to her congregational church family on Labor Day weekend.

PERSONALS

by Pat Oakes

Many of the **Towery-Masters** clan were in church on Sunday, June 5th, for a wonderful occasion--the christening of six-month-old **Agnes Jeanette Masters**, the daughter of **Ricky and Monica Masters**, the granddaughter of **Mary (Towery) and Danny Masters**, and the great-granddaughter of **Pastor Emeritus John and Eleanor Towery**. It was a great joy for old-timers in the church to see John and Eleanor (who don't get to church very often these days) - and a good opportunity for newer members to meet John and Eleanor.



Pastor Emeritus John and Eleanor Towery attended great-granddaughter Agnes' christening on June 5th.

Ches and Maggie Towery were there with daughter **Krystal**. Their son **KC** and his bride **Kendra** were getting back from their delayed honeymoon that evening and missed the service. Also in attendance were Monica's mother and many friends of both **Ricky and Monica** and **Mary and Danny**.



Ricky and Monica Masters with Agnes Jeanette Masters

Agnes behaved with calm aplomb for the service. The children in attendance were invited up to the front row by Pastor Tom to hear an explanation of the meaning of the christening- and stayed there so that they could see the baby.

The Pinkards had a cool trip east last month. The ostensible reason was Tommie's sister's wedding in Georgia, and that went well. They also enjoyed a Road Scholar (née Elderhostel) tour of Savannah. They can now understand why this is the most acclaimed Road Scholar trip in the U.S. After the wedding, they drove on up to a mountaintop just outside Brevard, N.C., to visit Doyal's sister and her husband. They made a tour of waterfalls in the area, and enjoyed the breezes. Cool!

Ben White is enjoying his new apartment at Westminster Manor, having had a visit from son **Cappy** and family (primarily for a family reunion of the Baxter clan (Marguerite's mother's family) and sister **Patt** and brother-in-law **Earl**, here to visit her allergist and shop for a new car. By the way, **Cathy Hubbs** is a new resident there, and Cappy's family, Cathy and son John and Ben had a fine visit at dinner. Patt especially enjoyed Cathy's eye-opening account (for Patt) of her experience in a Japanese relocation center where she served for a time as a volunteer with Nisei children during World War II.

Mona Maser is back from her recent trip to Sacramento, California, to visit with their two sons and their families. Husband Jim held down the fort here in Austin. First she visited with their oldest son **Bryan** and his wife **Ormee**, they went shopping at Union Square in San Francisco, took in the sights at Fisherman's Wharf, and had dinner at "The Boiling Crab" feasting on king crab legs and steamed clams. The second part of her trip was visiting with their youngest son **Dana** and his wife **Crystal** along with grandchildren **Kai (9) and Adara (7)**. The highlight was going to Six Flags Discovery Kingdom in Vallejo. The grandchildren experienced their first ride on a roller coaster. Kai turned a few shades of green after he went through the first loop and corkscrew turns on "Kong." When he got off of the ride he said "Never again - that was too much for me." He did however enjoy the wooden roller coaster "Roar" after he rode it a total of four times. Mona reports that they got soaked on the "Monsoon Rapids" and the "Lazy River," but with the bright sunshine and 75 degree temperatures, they soon dried off. Mona, son Dana, and the grandchildren also took a fast trip over the Sierra Mountains to check on their home in Yerington, Nevada. They stopped in Reno along the way and the kids enjoyed themselves in the hotel swimming pool and the arcades at Circus, Circus. It was an uneventful flight back to Austin, and the dogs and Jim are very glad Mona is back.

Evan Ross Lippert, son of **Andria Miner and Alan Lippert**, was born on April 30, 2011; he weighed exactly 8 lbs (though he had already gained 3 lbs. in 7 weeks.

SOUTH CENTRAL CONFERENCE 48th ANNUAL MEETING

by Beth Gleason

The South Central Conference's 48th Annual Meeting theme this year was "Watering our Spirits" and yes, they were, indeed! As our church's lay delegate I had the privilege of representing our church family. Also in attendance from CCA/UCC were **Rev. Dr. Liz Nash** and **Reuel Nash**, **Rev. Dr. Whit Bodman** and **Martin Garrison**. Liz attended in a dual role as the Brazos Association Minister. This was my first time to attend a UCC Annual Meeting on your behalf and I thank you all for the privilege of representing The Congregational Church/UCC of Austin.

The most important part of the meeting was the worship and the keynote speaker, **Rev. Dr. Yvette Flunder**, from the **City of Refuge UCC in San Francisco, California**. A fabulous worship experience followed the short business presentation on Friday night. Dr. Flunder preached, and her pentacostal style was complemented by the spectacular gospel choir from the Pilgrim UCC church of Houston. The service was rich and full - with testimonials, prayers and short sermons by various gifted UCC preachers. The stage was draped in a gauzy-sea-blue material and a representative from each of the



Rev. Dr. Whit Bodman, Rev. Dr. Liz Nash, Reuel Nash, Martin Garrison, Beth Gleason, Rev. Dr. Yvette Flunder and Rev. Mary Wilson

Our **2012 El Salvadoran Mission Trip** was promoted with a exhibit booth assembled by Liz Nash and Beth Gleason. Liz also made a five minute pitch to the entire conference promoting our trip on Sunday morning. (The El Salvador Mission trip booth is now on display in the Fellowship Hall.) Although most of the business meetings were short, we all celebrated that the South Central Conference budget for 2010 is in the black!



Martin Garrison, Rev. Dr. Yvette Flunder and Beth Gleason

five Associations in the South Central Conference poured water into one large pitcher to "water our spirits" together. It was wonderful to have a critical mass of UCC folks in one, big room, all praising God together.

Dr. Flunder is a gifted preacher and her keynote address on Saturday morning was exceptional as well. The Congregational Church crew swarmed her with love and conversation after her keynote address as evidenced by the photographs on this page.



Beth Gleason and Rev. Dr. Liz Nash displaying the El Salvador Mission booth

The 2012 Meeting will be hosted by the **South Association in New Braunfels, June 1-3, 2012**. Thank you once again for the privilege of representing The Congregational Church/UCC at the 48th Annual Meeting in 2011.

A GRADUATION CELEBRATION FOR ALEX

Celebration was the order of the day on May 29 when church members and friends gathered after church to congratulate Alex Vandestadt on her graduation from Anderson High School. There was a special performance of "Wide Open Spaces" during the church service, and everyone enjoyed the festivities afterward with cake, ice cream and much merriment.

Alex is looking forward to attending Trinity University in San Antonio in the fall, but she'll be coming back to visit us often. Best of luck, Alex!



Special music: "Wide Open Spaces" by The Dixie Chicks, requested by Becky Nash from wherever she is traveling.



Proud Mom Robin Chapman and church members snap photos of the graduate.



Hopeful children look on as Pastor Tom and Alex cut the cake.



Joe, on behalf of the deacons, expressed our love and best wishes for Alex as she moves on to her next challenge.



Pastor Tom, Alex, Robin and Joe McMillan

He does have dark hair, but so did big sister **Julianne** (3) at first. Julianne has taken it all in stride despite consistently requesting a sister. She likes to pat his head and will often kiss him goodnight. Andria's mom is back home in Connecticut until mid-August. So Andria is solo while on maternity leave (Andria is a veterinarian). Alan's mom, **Barbara**, will be coming to stay with them in mid-July when she goes back to work. As for getting rest ... ha ha).

Bill and Joan Mueller traveled in June first on a tour to Palo Duro Canyon, then a week-long stay in San Francisco to see friends and family and to attend the full Wagner Ring Cycle. Their Austin family returns in July after a six month sabbatical in Montreal, Canada. **Drs. Michael Oden and Elizabeth Mueller** both teach in the Planning Department at UT. Their son **Luke** is Bill and Joan's only grandchild and they've missed his presence and his great hugs. It has been a little quiet here in Austin without them.

Florence Castle was back in church on June 19th for the first time since early April. In addition to enjoying seeing everyone, she was particularly delighted by the worship gift of Bill Beardall singing and playing his guitar--the lively song written in the 1930s--"Jesus is my Air-o-plane" accompanied by our terrific trio. Lots of toes were tapping in the congregation!



Book club members left to right : Sara Ross, Barbara Burnham, Chester Rosson, Rambie and Fran Riggs, Dave Ross, Dennis Murphy, Bill Briggs, Mathis Blackstock, and Mel Oakes

The Men's and Women's Book Clubs had a joint meeting at Fran and Rambie Briggs' home in Lago Vista on the first Saturday morning in June.

Suzanne Vanderpoel had the joy of watching her oldest grandson, **Ty Hemphill**, graduate with honors from Cinco Ranch High School in Katy in early June. The ceremony

was lovely and HUGE, with over 700 in the class. Ty plans to attend Texas A&M this fall to study environmental engineering. Ty did not have much time to celebrate, as he had to drive up to Camp Longhorn in Suzanne's old hometown, Burnet, the next morning to start work as a counselor for a second year. Her family goes back four generations with the camp: her father was the camp doctor; she was the first girl signed up for the girls' camp and worked there as a counselor for 6 years; her daughter went there and now her two grandsons, in addition to other family members. Ty's 15-year-old brother, Tanner, is a camper there again this year. Each term, many of the campers make the famous Mile Swim (Suzanne even watched a kid with polio do it, with the camp founder, an Olympic swimmer and head of the Navy Frogmen in WW II, swimming alongside him every stroke of the way.) For three years as a camper, Ty came in first in that Mile Swim. (Ty's high school swim team has made it to the State Finals for the past two years and broken the school records.) Suzanne learned recently that his brother Tanner came in first this year, so now both of them hold Mile Swim medals. She is so proud of them!

Former pastor **Yoshi and Setsuko Kaneda** are enjoying the cooler temperatures in San Diego. Yoshi writes, "Once a pastor, forever a pastor until you drop dead!" is a quote from my friend. Almost two years ago I initiated "Stephen Ministry" at my church and it's going strong in caring for members and friends in times of their human needs through lay ministers. Now just recently I started a summer series of beginners classes for Japanese-speaking people in San Diego. Sixteen to 17 people actively participate in the class every Wednesday morning, learning and sharing their life experiences in a relaxed atmosphere. Topics include *Basic Human Rights and Christian Religion, Joy for Living, Sorrow and Brokenness, To Love and To Serve, Sickness and Death, Is There Resurrection?, Marriage/Divorce and Family Life, Retirement and Aging*, etc. It has taken much more time and energy than I anticipated to prepare for each presentation, but has really been rich learning experience for this old dog. What is the motivation that has pushed me doing these projects? 'In Christ I live and die.'"

Dennis and Kazuko Schneider of Tokyo, Japan, former members of this church, are brand new grandparents. Their daughter **Takako**, who was a little girl in this church years ago, and her husband **Robert Spevak** of Eugene, Oregon, are the proud parents of a little boy named **Kade Taira Schneider Spevak**. Kade was born in early April. Dennis is planning a trip in August to visit his sister in Ohio, his father, aunt & cousins in Indiana, and daughter, son-in-law and grandson in Oregon.

Mel and Pat Oakes enjoyed a trip to Vicksburg, MS, Mel's hometown, over the weekend of June 11-12. They

Brazos Association News

by Liz Nash

Our South Central Conference gathering at Annual Meeting at the Clear Lake Hilton, hosted by the Houston Association this past June 3-5, was warm, uplifting, and joyous. Most of our Brazos Association churches had delegates and visitors there. We heard magnificently inspired preaching and a keynote message from **Bishop Yvette Flunder**, senior minister of City of Refuge, a UCC church in San Francisco with ministries that welcome people from all aspects of society.

Part of the ministry of this church has been to start and support HIV/AIDS service centers, substance abuse programs, and youth support services. As a consequence, **Rev. Dr. Flunder** serves nationally and internationally in HIV/AIDS work. In the UCC, we do not normally have bishops, but in 2003 she was consecrated Presiding Bishop of The Fellowship, a multi-denominational group of over 100 primarily African American ministers and lay people from over 56 congregations and faith-based organization from in the US, Mexico, and Africa. She is a widely known and respected speaker and a well-known gospel singer, and we were blessed to have her with us. We were also blessed to have wonderful worship leadership that included the Pilgrim UCC choir and our Conference choir, worship leaders from throughout the Houston Association, **Conference Minister Douglas Anders** as our Sunday morning preacher, a talent show, and a Saturday evening concert from the **Salvation Army Harbor Lights Choir**.

To celebrate the Brazos Association presence at Annual Meeting, I will share a few highlights:

- **Ted Neely** from Weimar UCC, our outgoing Conference Board President, led the business meeting and was deservedly honored for his leadership that has helped the Board gain vision and spirit as we worship and do our work.
- Our Association churches contributed 287 school kits to Church World Service and personal hygiene kits to Back Bay Mission (by my count).
- **Rev. Dr. John Towery**, pastor emeritus of Congregational Church of Austin, was recognized for 60 years of ordained ministry. Although John was not with us, many know him and many have been blessed by his generous spirit and work.
- Many of our Brazos Association churches were recognized for being among the top ten OCWM giving churches in the South Central Conference and for being “5 for 5” giving churches. Your

We have two important gatherings coming up. On August 13 at 10 am, our Licensed Ministry group will meet for the second time at St. John's UCC in Burton. Our first gathering was an organizing meeting: new people are welcome to join us. Contact me at lizknash@gmail.com or 512-231-0045 if you are interested in licensed ministry, or if you want more in-depth study that these classes can give. We welcome those who want to join us.

Also, we have a **boundary training class** at St. John's Burton for authorized ministers, people preparing for ministry, and interested Church and Ministry committee members on September 10 from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm. The cost is \$40, and people can register by sending a check to the Conference office, made out to the South Central Conference UCC with a note that it is for the Sept. boundary training. We urge all who still need this training to attend, as it is the last session we will be offering in the near future.

Plan to come to the Annual Meeting next year! All from our churches are welcome.

Blessings,
Liz Nash

PERSONALS—*continued from page 6*

were gone 6 days--two days of driving each way. Mel and his two brothers organized a family reunion of Oakeses plus four other branches of the family that Mel has come to know through genealogical research. More than 70 folks showed up and listened very intently as Mel did a presentation which included family stories, a recording of Mel's late dad, extensive family photos, and a lot of new genealogical connections and information. There was also plenty of time for sharing food and memories. Making the trip extra special for Pat and Mel was the presence of their youngest daughter **Mardie** who flew in from California to Jackson as a combined birthday present (significant ones for Mel and Pat this year!), Mother's Day, Father's Day and July 4th --all rolled into one. Mardie very much enjoyed visiting with her Oakes cousins whom she does not get to see very often.

We will be seeing more of **Ranae Beeker** at church in the coming months. After five years of working full-time, taking several quarters off, and making several moves, she finally finished her master's of science in nursing and received her degree from Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She now lives in San Marcos and works as a nurse at the Central Texas Medical Center. With more free time, she even made the commute to Nodie's in Round Rock for the most recent Women's Book Club meeting.

The Congregational Church of Austin
408 West 23rd Street
Austin, Texas 78705-5214

Return Service Requested

Deadline for September VISITOR — August 21

Our hardworking columnists will be taking a break during the month of August, so the next issue of The Visitor will be published in September. In the meantime, if you have news you want to make sure reaches CCoA members and friends, e-mail Kathy Whatley at ucausti@swbell.net.

Directory Update Deadline is July 3

As you know, Kathy Whatley is working on updating the church directory to be printed and distributed in July. **Please note that the final date to submit changes in your CCoA directory listing is July 3.**

There is a list of all CCoA members and friends with your current information on a clipboard in the Fellowship Hall. If you have not already done so, please review your information and note any changes in the box next to your name. You may also respond to this e-mail with updates and changes to ucausti@swbell.com. **Don't forget, the deadline is July 3rd!**