

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt



In the late summer of 1989, folks in Leipzig, East Germany, started gathering around St. Nikolai church at night to sing. What began as a thousand people soon swelled to over three hundred thousand. By November, over half the population of Leipzig was turning out to sing protest songs, inspirational songs, songs that were fun to sing. Their united voices helped knock down the Berlin Wall.

Sometime later, an interviewer asked an officer of the East German secret police, the Stasi, why they didn't crush these protests as they had so many other acts of defiance and resistance. He replied, "We had no contingency plan for song."

In the season of Advent, Christians read "The Song of Mary" from Luke's Gospel. The song begins with one of the most beautiful verses in the Bible: My soul magnifies the Lord. Progressive Christians often skip quickly over this verse so they can get to the ones they really like: the powerful have been toppled from their thrones and the rich have been sent away empty. But the song's first line isn't just beautiful, it's key to everything that follows. Mary's soul magnifies God, and she expresses her soul by singing.

All human souls desire expression. All human souls seek outlets, openings through which to pour, voices with which to speak. There's nothing worse for a human soul than to be smothered, stifled or suppressed. To be denied expression, bottled up without an outlet. To go unheard and unseen, ignored and unrealized. Finding this unbearable, human souls never give up seeking an outlet.

Mary's God-magnifying soul uncorks the bottle and pours freely into the world. Through Mary—her soul, her singing—God erupts into the world. As song. Song of defiance and protest. Song of hope and justice. Song that reverberates through centuries, changing lives and influencing events.

"We had no contingency plan for song," the Stasi officer said. He was only partly right. The East German regime had no contingency plan for the human soul. No contingency plan for the countless ways human souls magnify God and release God into the world. As song. As visual art. As the written and spoken word. As the will to act and the refusal to act. As noisy protest and sheer silence. Human souls magnify God in countless ways, and in countless ways human souls pour God into the world as felt power. Power that changes lives, influences events, produces real effects. Power that brings down walls.

There was no contingency plan for the human soul. Remember that, sisters and brothers. Take that to heart as the new regime prepares to ascend the throne in the USA. As people who're rich, powerful and ruthless

deregulate themselves and unleash their appetite upon our land. As they send the poor away empty, steal more from Earth and inflict more abuse upon her body. Remember that, sisters and brothers, for we're not the first people to live under a regime we find abhorrent. Others have. Others do.

Many are asking now, what can I do? Here's what you can do. Get in touch with your soul. Your God-magnifying soul. Get deeply in touch with the part of you that feels most deeply connected to God or open to God, whoever you believe God to be, however you experience God. Whether or not you even like the words "God" or "soul," become sensitive to and intimate with the part of you that resonates most deeply and powerfully with the spirit of Life. With the impulse towards compassion. With the urge to liberate, heal and reconcile. With the gut-fire for justice. With the capacity to imagine and envision more humane alternatives, and the ability to collaborate with others to make them real. With the courage to resist and defy people and systems that oppress and do harm. Get in touch with your soul, because your soul knows what to do.

The regime in which we're about to live cannot ultimately control or defeat the human soul. The God-magnifying human soul will erupt into the world again and again and again. Here and there and all over. Through you, me and countless others. As kindness, mercy and compassion. As defiant protest. As the demand that something be done or the refusal to do something. As collaboration between individuals and whole communities. As the creation of more just systems, humane forms and sustainable ways. As people lift their voices, put their bodies on the line and make their soul-power felt.

Get in touch with your soul. Your soul knows what to do.

(Photo Credit: Dennis Skley)

Our CCA Endowment Fund: A Wonderful Time to Support It

The Board of Trustees is encouraging you to consider contributing to the CCA Endowment Fund in memory of, or in honor of, a loved one. Due to the generosity of an anonymous donor, all contributions will be matched up to \$10,000! This is a unique and wonderful opportunity to strengthen our church's ministry and presence in the world, now and in the future, by building up our CCA Endowment Fund.

Church Leadership

Trustee Chair	Don Brown
Deacons Chair	Jennifer Howicz
Outreach Team	Reuel Nash & John Goff
Moderator Co-Chairs	Barbara Burnham & Bill Beardall
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Pam Tucker
Christian Education	Rachel Dietz
Coordinator	John Burlinson
Clerk	Betty Bodman
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Webmistress	Sara Ross
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

Church Announcements

Say “Hi” to your Outreach Coordinators

John Goff and Reuel Nash are serving as “Outreach Coordinators” this year. As most of you may be aware, the outreach coordinator position is actually quite new. Not long ago we had a Board of Christian Outreach that oversaw our outreach activities. Or at least tried to. The truth is, most of our outreach activities – Freeze Night Shelter, Front Porch Lunch, Micah 6 Food pantry, Green Team, Care Team – are autonomous and self-directed among a dedicated team of volunteers. Outreach happens at our church whether or not we have a Board or a Coordinator. Quoting shamelessly from an insurance company commercial: it’s what we do. In a recent effort to streamline our Church’s governance, we therefore decided, along with Christian Education (which now operates with paid staff), to eliminate the Boards and replace them with two coordinators each.

So: what does an outreach coordinator DO in our church? Or, better yet: what SHOULD an outreach coordinator do? As we see it, we have 3 primary responsibilities:

1. Outreach Coordinators are representatives of, and advocates for, the outreach mission or our church. One of us sits on Coordinating Council, and it is our job to ensure that outreach concerns factor into the church’s decision-making. We are YOUR representatives. If you have any sort of concern about, or idea for outreach activities, speak to Reuel or John and we can ensure that it gets a hearing.

2. Outreach Coordinators are conduits of information regarding outreach. We keep the Coordinating Council informed about outreach activities. We inform the outreach teams about decisions of the coordinating council that affect them. But perhaps our most important function in this regard is to keep the Congregation informed about outreach activities and opportunities for participation. This is where we recognized the most room for improvement – which begins with a renewed effort to present outreach moments. These are indeed good, but we can also do a

lot better in making sure that outreach information is published more often in the church’s newsletter and highlighted on our web page.

3. Outreach Coordinators provide advice to the Trustees regarding our Cooperative Responsibilities budget. Until this year we have only had to recommend minor modifications, but with the large budget shortfall this year, we have had to manage sharp reductions in some of our donations. Those of you who were at last Sunday’s congregational meeting are aware that there was a strong consensus for trying to offset the larger cuts – such as OCWM, Huston-Tillotson, CUE - with special directed offerings through the year. We coordinators were tasked with organizing these events, so this is something that we will incorporate into our budgetary responsibilities.

So there you have it – that’s what an Outreach Coordinator does (or WILL do). Don’t hesitate to chat with John or Reuel about any outreach topic on your mind.

The Front Porch Lunch ministry is in GREAT need of a few more **volunteers** to serve lunches. Lunch is served to area homeless (mostly Life-Works guests) every Thursday of the month in our Fellowship Hall. If you are interested, contact John Goff or our church Administrator, Rimma Aguirre.

Micah 6, the consortium of 11 University area churches working together to meet the needs of the homeless, need food and servers for its weekly **Sunday afternoon drop-in center** at University Baptist church. The drop-in needs volunteers who can **cook** a healthy dish for about 25 people, or come to the drop-in center to **help serve** those dishes. More information on the drop-in center can be found at: <http://m6sydic.weebly.com/>

Micah 6 also needs clothes for its **Fig Leaf clothing distribution center**. Donations can be brought to our Sunday morning worship. If you have any questions or need more information, please see our church’s Micah 6 representative, Whit Bodman.

Personals

by Pat Oakes

The congregation bade a fond farewell to **Tiffany Garland** during coffee hour on **December 4**. We were delighted when **Annie Nash**, Tiffany's good friend, recommended her for the job. Tiffany has been our devoted child caregiver for the past several years. She has just gotten a full-time job with **Adult Protective Services** and is looking forward to her new career. Thank you for being a part of our church family, Tiffany.



12/4/16 Tiffany Garland said goodbye to several of her little charges at a farewell reception during coffee hour in early December--On the left, Tiffany Garland and Shaela Rutherford holding her daughter Ena--in front are Naomi Rutherford and Zoey Parkhill

Florence Castle, now 100 and 1/2, had a fall in her home recently. She had a few bruises, but nothing broke. Her caregiver found her when she arrived for the day--and what did Florence do? She looked up at her and smiled and then was able to get up with a little help. She was taken to the nearby minor emergency care center just to be sure she was really OK.



11/27/16 Nodie Murphy leading the choir 2 weeks before she had her right hip replaced--l-r Amy Harris, Dennis Murphy, Michael Ross (visiting his folks for Thanksgiving), Lucy Hanouille, Barbara Burnham

There has been a whole lot of patching going on at the Congregational Church of Austin. **Nodie Murphy** had her right hip replaced at **St. David's Hospital** on **December 12** and has been recovering at home after 2 days at the hospital. The week before Nodie's surgery, **Pam Tucker's** partner **Allison Goodgame** also had her hip replaced and was home from the hospital after 8 hours!! Allison is also doing quite well as she continues her recuperation.

Ruth Koenig enjoyed Christmas this year with her adorable twin great-granddaughters, **Charlotte (Lottie)** and **Dorothea (Thea)**. They really make family gatherings a lot of fun. She was delighted that they could sit still long enough for their photo!



Congratulations to **Julia Ross** who received her **Master of Arts in Developmental Education** for her thesis, "Educational Life History of an Early College High School Valedictorian." She completed this while performing her full-time job as head of the **Special Education Department** at **Reagan High School** in Austin and raising two small children! Julia is **Robin Rosson's** wife and the daughter of **Enid** and **Jim Ross** of Austin.



12/17/16 Julia Ross and Samantha (in the mortarboard), baby Rebecca and Robin Rosson after Julia's commencement at Texas State University



12/18/16 Warinda and William Harris, Robin and Julia Rossen talking to Van Herd, Ches Towery, ?, ?, Kristen and Zoey Parkhill enjoying the wonderful Christmas party hosted by the Deacons with delicious contributions from church members

Our traditional candlelight carol service was on Sunday evening, **December 18**. The sanctuary was beautifully lit with candles and decorated with bright red poinsettias. At the conclusion of singing "Silent Night," the congregation left the hall in silence--and then came together again in the Fellowship Hall for a festive Christmas party hosted by the Deacons with many other folks contributing holiday treats. Among the familiar faces at the service were family of the late **John Towery**, pastor of this church for 30 years-- daughter **Mary Towery Masters** and her husband **Danny Masters**, their son **Ricky Masters** and his wife **Monica**, and **John** and **Eleanor's** son **Ches Towery** with his daughter **Krystal--Maggie** was at home with a bad back.



12/18/16 The church beautifully lit for the candlelight service--Danny and Mary Towery Masters with son Ricky Masters and his wife Monica (hidden by Jason Parkhill), Ches Towery, the Parkhill family, Whit Bodman, Robin Chapman

Heart of Texas Association News

January

by Liz Nash

In early December, I attended a meeting called AM21 in San Antonio for UCC people from all over the US who work with Committees on Ministry. “AM 21” stands for Authorizing Ministry in the 21st century. This particular gathering dealt with the first revision of our Manual on Ministry since about the year 2000. Although many of you may not even be aware of the Manual, it is very important to all of our churches, ministers, and Members in Discernment (formerly students in care), and indeed to the ministry we all share. That’s why I am writing about what the Manual on Ministry is and the process of revising it, which has involved a group of volunteers recruited from across the UCC. The final version will not be adopted until a substantial period of soliciting comments and revisions, again from across the UCC, is completed.

Some of the most important work our Association does is that of our Committee on Ministry or the COM (formerly the Church and Ministry Committee). This Committee oversees our Authorized Ministers -- ordained, licensed, and commissioned. The COM also oversees our Members in Discernment on their paths to Authorized Ministry. In our case, that involves our licensed and ordained ministers -- we have no active commissioned ministers, a large (for our small Association) and active group of licensed ministers, our Members in Discernment, and, of course, our ordained ministers. We use our UCC Manual on Ministry constantly in this process to give orderly and clear guidance, constructed with the long experience of similar committees across the denomination and of the national UCC people who work with them. We do not necessarily use it as a strict rule book, but we adhere closely to almost all of the processes it recommends.

Amazingly, the draft of this revision is much shorter than the previous version! Does this ever happen? The proposed version is much simpler to read.

Certain complex processes, such as how to work with chaplains to get professional certification, are handled with other resources. There are a few major changes proposed. For example, the UCC General Synod several years ago adopted a resolution allowing for people to prepare for ordained ministry in alternative ways to pursuing a Master of Divinity degree, but the guidance for how to do that has been lacking. Also, the church and our understanding of its work has been changing, but our guidance about ordination has been somewhat limited to an assumption of a call to full time parish ministry. This draft Manual addresses these changes in a thoughtful way. The people who were part of this meeting gave substantial feedback on what has been proposed. Our Committee on Ministry will be asked to do the same, and I anticipate we will be sharing that with the wider Association at our next meeting. I hope many of you can be part of this process of seeking to make our ministry more faithful to what God is calling us to do and be.

Blessings in Christ,

Liz Nash

Heart of Texas Association Minister

Personals (continued)

by Pat Oakes

The **Christmas Day** dinner for the homeless was another success thanks to the organizational skills of **Jaime Hadley** (chief Santa) and about 30 volunteers. A short church service was held in the sanctuary at noon and about 12:30 the dinner commenced. According to pastor **Tom**, 94 meals were served--and there were even leftovers to send home to the co-op where two of our church members live. Among the many volunteers were **Jim, Jen, Emily, and Tess Howicz; Joy Penticuff; the Hawvers; the Rosses; Marilyn and Olivia Vaché** and Olivia Vaché's fiancé **Matt Greene; Amy Harris** and her mom, **Debby Kohrt; the Briggses; Paula, Giovanni, Stella, and Michael Fracasso; Greg Futch** and his brother **Ronnie; Cecile Adam; the Christeson-Goff family; Faye and Andy Dierksen; Jonathan Geer and Roberto Hernandez; Jo Jensen and Bob Garrett; Barbara Burnham; Bill Beardall; the Lemleys; Ruth Koenig; Pat Oakes; the Muellers; Robin Chapman and Tom and Alex VandeStadt.**



12/1/16 Abi Lytle (1 1/2) with her parents Heather and Zac in Malawi



12/25/16 Some of the many volunteers helping with the Christmas dinner put on by the church--Tess and Emily Howicz, Jim Howicz, Michael Fracasso, Tom VandeStadt, Stella Fracasso, Giovanni Fracasso, Fran and Rambie Briggs, Jaime Hadley, Olivia Vaché and her fiancé Matt Greene

Heather and Zac Lytle still can't really believe that everything they're hearing on the radio in **Malawi** is actually happening in the **USA**. Heather notes that it's easy to wake up there and forget, but then turn on the radio for the world news and be jolted back to this strange new reality. They are

doing well in Malawi and were very excited that Heather's parents, her brother and her sister-in-law were all coming to **Cape Town, SA**, to visit them for Christmas. Heather's fellowship ends in June, so she has to start getting serious about looking for a new job afterwards. They're hoping something will work out so that they can stay there for another year or two. It seems like they have spent so much time getting the lay of the land and it would be nice to have more time to continue to do work now that they are settled. Heather is continuing to do work at the hospital as well as working to develop some new clinics at the **Baylor Pediatric HIV Center** to provide obstetric and gynecologic care for adolescents and young adults living with HIV. Zac has found some work to do helping with construction at a neighboring hotel, with the added perk that they can go use their swimming pool! That's quite a perk since it's summer there now and quite hot. They have been having power outages daily, sometimes for up to 24

hours with about 5 hours of power returning in the middle of the night. Luckily the water outages aren't as frequent. It does make for some frustrations, but Zac went and bought a gas stove/oven (theirs was electric making it very difficult to cook anything!) and that has really helped normalize life without power. They have a battery for the house so even during the power outages they can have a few lights and internet that still work. Their daughter **Abigail** is growing and learning new things every day. She's a joy for them to watch and she has a joyous (mostly) personality. She's learning more and more words and has recently picked up the word "please" which makes her frequent demands sound so much sweeter.

The **Lemley** family is celebrating **Jeffrey's** December graduation from the **University of Houston** with a **Master's in Architecture** with a concentration in **Urban Planning**. Now it is time to look for a job! Jeffrey's long-time girl-friend **Allison Edwards** graduated from **A&M** in **May**, has been working for a vet in Houston, and will be starting her year-long internship on **Jan. 4** at a horse-breeding ranch outside of **Guthrie, OK**. So now Jeffrey will be on the lookout for jobs not only in the Houston area where he and Allison have been living, but also the booming metropolis of **Oklahoma City**, about a half an hour from Guthrie. Sister **Katie** is still working at **Maudie's** (she got the job with the help of Emily Howicz where Emily has been working) in the Triangle and is registered for more ACC classes while considering her future degree major options. Unfortunately, **Lynne** says, much like the case of her older brother who worked for way too long at the Oasis, Katie is having kind of a minor blast working at Maudie's. Soon she will be a server & servers at Maudie's can make decent money. **George** and **Lynne** are slowly getting settled in to their new home just down the street from **Nodie** and **Dennis Murphy** in **Round Rock**.

Mel and **Pat Oakes** enjoyed a wonderful 9-day visit with their middle daughter, **Sarah**, who was visiting from **Arlington, VA**. Her husband **Joe Pierce** had to stay at home and work, but Sarah had a good time in Austin helping/visiting her parents and visiting with a number of friends while on her Christmas break from teaching high school chemistry students at **St. Stephen--St. Agnes Episcopal School** in **Alexandria, VA**.



12/11/16 Jeffrey, Lynne, and Katie Lemley ready for the holidays

Through the suggestion and encouragement of **Faye Dierksen's** husband **Andrew** and his mother **Tracy Dierksen**, Faye decided to return to **Chadron State College** in **Chadron, Nebraska**, for her Master's degree about 10 days before the start of the semester in January 2014. She chose The School of **BEAMSS** (**Agriculture & Rangeland Management, Family & Consumer Sciences, Business, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Geoscience, Pre-Health Professions**) and after a move to Austin, Texas, a new job, and two years of hard work, Faye received her **Master's of Science in Organizational Management**. Faye would love to say she has big plans for the future, but she currently really likes her job, is enjoying Texas, and embracing all the time she has to spend with Andy. As those who know Faye well always say, it probably won't be long until she's back in school, but until then she'll just enjoy her accomplishment! Since it was too far to go back to Nebraska for the December graduation, Faye decided to celebrate with family members and the congregation at coffee hour on **December 18**.

History Corner

by Pat and Mel Oakes



12/18/16 Faye Dierksen wore her robe for the coffee hour celebration of her graduation with her Master's degree from Chadron College



About 1939 The parsonage and the Congregational Church of Austin at 408 W. 23rd St

The **education wing** of the church was dedicated in **1969**, getting close to 50 years ago now. See the program at <https://congregationalchurchofaustin.org/1969-ed-wing-dedication/> The architect for the addition to the old church building was **Richard (Dick) Swallow**, a member of the church at the time. He graduated from the **Rhode Island School of Design** in **1953** and earned his master's degree in architecture from **MIT** in **1957**. He married his wife **Gail** in **1956** in **Providence, RI**--they were both from there. They moved to **Austin** in **1957**. He retired as **Professor Emeritus** after 50 years of teaching at the **UT School of Architecture** on **August 31, 2007**. Sadly, Gail died in 2010. To pass the time and help him get over his grief, Dick embarked on an art project (cutting and folding old credit cards, tops of Blue-Bell ice-cream and junk mail, etc., to create sculptural objects) that was exhibited at the School of Architecture's **Goldsmith Hall** in **2012**.

Dick recalls all of the meetings, planning, and redoing of plans starting in 1964 that took place leading up to the completion of the addition (now called the **Towery Wing**). "It took longer to build and we were over budget," he says wryly. Now **86**, he still lives in Austin and is active at **Covenant Presbyterian Church** with his daughter and son-in-law **Susan** and **David Ashton**.

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408 West 23rd Street
Austin, Texas 78705-5214

Return Service Requested

February Visitor Deadline—January 18, 2017

History Corner, cont'd
by Pat and Mel Oakes



Dedication of the Educational Wing

The Congregational Church of Austin
408 West Twenty-third Street
Sunday, September 28, 1969, 4:00 p.m.



1/24/10 View of the church and education wing from the 3rd floor of the parking garage diagonally across the street

9/28/1969 Architectural drawing from the program for the dedication of the new education wing



About 1965 Richard Swallow