

THE VISITOR

February 2013

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt

Rev. John Towery, Pastor Emeritus

The **Energy Action Team** of the **Interfaith Environmental Network** has over the past few months been busy writing a manual to help religious communities form ministry teams in their communities that address climate change. One of the specific goals of the manual is to encourage religious communities to determine their carbon footprint and then significantly reduce it by becoming more energy efficient and, if possible, producing on-site solar energy. A number of religious communities in Austin are well on their way in this journey, having worked with the Energy Action Team to determine their carbon footprint, having taken measures to reduce it, and in some cases, having invested in solar panels. A few of our University-area church neighbors have begun this process. I'm hoping our church decides to do so as well.



One good start would be to attend the **Interfaith Environmental Network's** upcoming symposium, "How To Be A Green Church," which will be held on **Tuesday, February 5, 7:00 pm**, at **St. David's Episcopal Church**, 301 E. 8th St. (free parking in their garage). St. David's has been green certified by **Greenfaith.org**, and by the **City of Austin's Green Business Leaders Program**. Come hear folks from St. David's discuss how they became certified, and Marc Coudert from the City of Austin Sustainability Office as he shares how the city is promoting green practices.

What follows is the Forward I wrote for the manual published by the **Energy Action Team**.

Authentic spiritual journeys involve facing the pain of our brokenness, entering bravely into it, taking responsibility for healing and repairing it, and drawing on our spiritual tradition's wisdom and power to forge ahead. We're on a journey together right now, both individually and collectively. In the words of this manual, it's a "journey to heal the damage done to the environment and human-kind the world over." This "journey to heal" is the defining characteristic of our time. It's a multi-faceted one that involves the transformation of every dimension of our humanity—the psychological, social, political, economic, technological, and cultural. But most profoundly, this journey is a spiritual one in which the human soul will further awaken to its proper place and role within the community we call Earth. In this journey, we'll face the pain of our troubled and destructive relationship with Earth, and we'll draw on spiritual wisdom and power to realize our potential for a more intimate and life-sustaining relationship with Earth.

Perhaps the most important words in this manual are "each one of us can make a difference in the world by making choices...." Each and every one of us, if we choose to do so, can commit ourselves to the "journey to heal the damage done." This manual provides us with the practical knowledge we need to change how we live in ways that bring us into deeper harmony with our planetary home. The future of human life on Earth depends upon the choices we make and how we change our lives. There's no avoiding that fact. We cannot look for religious palliatives to ease our discomfort, hope God will intervene and rescue us from ourselves, or resign ourselves to despair and give up. We must face reality, make choices, and change—all the while drawing on our religious and spiritual traditions to guide and sustain us.

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We are not separate from our planetary home, Earth. We breathe Earth's air into our lungs, our muscles feed off its oxygen in the blood that flows through our veins, and all that passes through us comes from sunlight, soil, and water. We are of the Earth, and its beauty and complexity reveal deeper truths about us, and mysteries that inspire words like sacred and holy and leave us in awe. May we awaken to the ways we harm that which sustains us, and choose the journey to "heal the damage done." May our grandchildren and their children look back upon us with love and gratitude for the choice we have made. May this manual guide us as we journey together.

TOM

The Annual CCA Spring Retreat at Slumber Falls Camp in New Braunfels takes place the weekend of May 3-5. Please contact Marilyn Vaché or Tom VandeStadt if you'd like to help plan, or if you have ideas about a theme, topic, event, or speaker you'd like to include this year.



Micah 6 Seeks Part-Time Coordinator

Micah 6 is hiring a part-time Coordinator. **Qualifications** include a genuine interest in working with volunteers and the community, organizational and project management skills, and the ability to work a flexible schedule. **Duties** include recruiting, scheduling, training, and retaining volunteers; providing staff support to the Board of Directors and its committees; maintaining the Micah 6 website; and helping to develop enrichment programs for our pantry recipients and youth guests. Applicants must submit a resume to info@micah6austin.org by **February 28, 2013**. Please read the complete job description on the [Micah 6 Website](#).

Church Leadership

Trustees Chair	John Goff
Deacons Chair	Joe McMillan
Christian Outreach Chair	Bill Beardall
Moderator	Reuel Nash
Treasurer	David Ross
Financial Secretary	Steve Domingue
Clerk	Betty Bodman
Historian	Jaime Hadley
Web mistress	Sara Ross

The Caregivers' Journey: The Joys and Jolts of Caring for a Loved One

The event will provide critical information for all who are caring for a loved one or may be caring for a loved one in the future!

Featuring

Keynote Speaker, Jim Comer, Author of *When Roles Reverse, a Guide to Parenting Your Parents*
www.parenting-your-parents.com

Amy Praskac, owner of On the Record Organizing
www.ontherecordorganizing.com/amy-praskac

Michelle Shaffer
Director of Community Education and Outreach
Family Eldercare
www.familyeldercare.org

Janet Allen, Executive Director
Faith In Action Caregivers
Southwest Austin
www.faithinactioncaregivers.org/southwest_austin_texas.php

Saturday, Feb. 23, 2013, 8:30 AM - 1 PM
University Presbyterian Church
2203 San Antonio Street
<http://upcaustin.org/directions-parking>

Registration \$10.00

Lunch, parking, and childcare are provided.

Register to Kathy Escandell
Director of Spiritual Formation
University Presbyterian Church
education@upcaustin.org
512.476-5321 x 202

Personals by Pat Oakes

The church family in Austin had very mixed feelings when in early January **Ranae Beeker** shared with us that she was moving to **Bremerton, Washington**, for a new job in a hospital there. It is also where her parents and many family members live. She and her son **Gavin** were going to make the long drive together—a great opportunity for sharing time together. We all wish her well in her new job, but she will be sorely missed by the congregation!



Ranae Beeker and Jaime Hadley ready for farewell cake on Jan. 13th. Mel Oakes, Dennis Murphy, and Chester Rosson are in the background.

Keep **Ned Murphy**, his wife **Faye**, and **Nodie and Dennis** and the whole family in your prayers. **Ned** has been deployed to Afghanistan for the next 10 months as a canine handler. The dogs are extensively trained by their handlers to sniff out explosives. Although Ned is in the Army cavalry scouts, soldiers in all branches of the military participate in what is called the dog troop. He has first been based at **Bagram Airfield** where he will be for 30 days. Dennis suggested that you might be interested in reading about the ancient city of Bagram—[http:// en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bagram](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bagram). Next month we hope to have an address where you can write to Ned.

Christmas and the New Year found **Bill and Betty Phillips** in the process of a move. They are leaving their little home in Austin's Allandale neighborhood and 30 years of memories. The new address is **14500 Graef Rd., Buda, Texas 78610**. Their e-mails will be the same, but they are not yet sure if they will have to change their phone number. Their new setting has a bucolic flavor. They have winding country roads and homes that are set back, where you have to get out of your car to open the gate, and that sort of thing. Paradoxically, they are not far from a new tollway and a world-class auto race track. A strong plus side for them is their proximity to the Austin airport and a shorter drive to daughter **Stephanie** and **Kathy's** home in Wimberley. Their daughter, **Katy**, has invited them to share her home in the country southeast of Austin, and they are very honored and excited about this new adventure. They note the trend for young adults to move back to the homes of their parents – why not the parents moving back to live with their children? Their dogs, **Prince and Chuleta**, will be joining Katy's three dogs, three horses, two longhorns and **Simon** the potbellied pig on ten acres of land with a large, almost-new house, pool, hot tub and various outbuildings, gardens and pastures. Bill has a large study in which to create more poetry, and Betty is enjoying having a music studio. Since returning home from **Panama** several years ago they have been trying to figure out what their next stage of life would look like and feel that this move is the right thing.

It was great to see **Lisa Kirch** and her daughter **Sarah** at church on Sunday, December 30th, visiting from **Alabama**. It is hard for those of us who have been in the church for years to believe that Sarah turned 17 on 12/12/12. Over the Christmas break they visited with a



3 Old home week at church with Lynne Lemley (note new haircut!) and Katie (right)—catching up with Sarah and Lisa Kirch visiting from Alabama on Dec. 30, 2012.

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cousin in **Little Rock** where they got snowed in and then went on to **Dallas** where they enjoyed visiting the wonderful museums there. From Austin, Lisa and Sarah made their way to **Houston** where they also went from museum to museum (Lisa is an art historian and Sarah is a fine artist). Lisa enjoyed driving Sarah around her old stomping grounds in the **Montrose** area of Houston before they made their way back home--safe and sound.

Doyal and Tommie Pinkard celebrated **Christmas, New Year** and grandson **William's** first birthday in **California** with son **Chris** and family in their new home. This was a four-day car trip each way because of a van full of presents and their **Corgi, Corky**. Never again, says Doyal, not even if granddaughter **Kiana** begs on bended knee (she loves Corky).

Another visitor from years past was **Jeri Winter Gradecki** who was in town for a dear friend's wedding the weekend of Jan. 13. An extra bonus with the visit was getting to meet her 8-week-old daughter **Korin**. Big brother Wylan and dad Ray did not get to come this time, but it is always wonderful to have them all come and visit.



Tommie Pinkard was delighted to see Jeri Winter Gradecki and meet her new baby girl Korin at church on Jan. 13, 2013

Check in next month to read all about **Doris Williams'** trip to **Washington, D. C.** for the **Presidential Inauguration**. Her latest report came from the Denny's in Texarkana where she was ready to get back on the chartered bus which was to arrive in D.C. on the morning of the 20th.

Pam Tucker's mom **Norma Tucker** has moved from her home in Round Rock to **The Cottages at Chandler Creek** (also in Round Rock). She is adjusting well, helped by the fact that she was able to take her poodle **Sophie** with her. It is close to where **Pam, Allison, Savanna and Harrison** live, so it is easy to get by for a visit. Pam was pleased to see our pastor emeritus **John Towery** and his wife **Eleanor** who also live there and gave them 4 hugs from all of us.



Norma Tucker with her poodle Sophie—2010

On **Sunday, January 13th** about 30 members and friends from **University Christian Church and University Baptist Church** enjoyed a wonderful concert given by singer and songwriter **Luke Leverett**. **Nodie Murphy** arranged the event, having heard Luke sing at several choral conferences she has attended. After church and before the concert there was a splendid light lunch coordinated by **Betty Appel** and augmented by members and friends. Luke writes of his songwriting and singing: "My songs are primarily spiritual. I've shied away from billing myself as a 'Christian artist' because of the baggage that accompanies that, but for me songwriting is so tied to the spiritual life that I can't help being a spiritual artist." Luke's latest CD is entitled "The Critic" and he sang several songs from it plus other selections.



Luke Leverett performed a concert featuring his original songs and lyrics on Jan. 23rd. Chester Rosson, Jaime Hadley, Pam and Savanna Tucker enjoyed the music.

The **Freese-Summerlin** family reports from New Jersey that at the end of January, **Elizabeth** starts her last semester of Ph.D. coursework. After that it is a year of

Brazos Association News

February

by Liz Nash

On Sunday, February 24th at 3 pm, **Friedens Church of Washington** will have a service of installation for **Pastor Greg Felder**. Greg, our brother in Christ, has been serving in ministry in the **Brazos Association** for several years, first as **Associate Pastor at St. John's UCC** in Burton and more recently at **Friedens in Washington**. Since he has been at Washington for a period of time already, his installation service will be a celebration of his ministry and the church's ministry rather than a welcome to a new minister. And there is plenty to celebrate for this pastor who continues to give so much of himself. I hope many of you will be able to join us on the 24th. All in our Association churches are invited.

I also want to share some news that is tinged both with sadness and joy. **John Sumner**, pastor of **St. Peter's UCC in Coupland**, has announced he will be retiring at the end of April. He and **Irene** will be moving to **Florida**, close to their daughter and her family including their two young grandsons (the second born this past January 2). John will leave St. Peter's with a building and grounds that have been transformed during his ministry: first with a sanctuary that is a lovely worship space, then with grounds that now provide play space for the entire community, and now (in process) with a completely new kitchen and remodeled fellowship hall. The church under his leadership has held summer day programs for the town with a host of programs offered for kids, including the art classes John taught. His ministry, with Irene as very active presence,

has been one of growth and giving. All of us who know them will miss John and Irene, but we also know they will find richness in their family life as they become an ongoing part of the grandchildren's lives and as they enjoy life on the Florida coast.

This past January 12th, **Church of the Savior** was the host of the **South Central Conference Open and Affirming Convocation** for the second time in two years. People from churches all over the Conference attended. The part of the program I attended including training on how to have graceful conversations, meaning how we each be the "hosts" of conversations in which we build more deep relationships within the ministry of our churches. This is a simple idea using simple guidelines to allow any of us, regardless of whether we are in an ONA church or not, build our community relationships as part of the body of Christ. The people of **Church of the Savior**, as always, provided a warm and gracious welcome. Many thanks to them!

Finally, there is a change in our plans for the **Brazos Association** meeting. Due to the construction at **St. Peter's, St. John's Burton** has graciously agreed to host on Sunday afternoon, April 7th (the Sunday after Easter). Unanticipated slab repair work has delayed construction at St. Peter's. We will be back there to meet soon, and will look forward to seeing the "finished product." Thanks to **St. John's** for welcoming all of us once again.

Heart of Texas Contemplative Outreach

You are cordially invited to attend the first **Heart of Texas Contemplative Outreach** quarterly meeting of 2013 on **Saturday, February 2** from **10am - noon** at **University United Methodist Church**. These meetings are designed to build community and support each other in our efforts to offer Centering Prayer within our faith communities. Each meeting will include a 20-minute prayer, announcements of upcoming events, plans for collaboration, and time to visit and share resources and ideas. Please come a little early so you can enjoy some coffee and refreshments before we begin our 20-min. sit at 10am.

The meeting will be held in the choir room at University UMC. Please park for free at the Platinum Parking lot across the street from the church on Guadalupe St. We have a very large homeless ministry on Saturday mornings and the parking lot adjacent the church building is not available for parking. After you park, walk down to the traffic light at 24th Street to cross, then enter the church property through the courtyard gates on Guadalupe. You will see the choir room entrance straight ahead. Please click on the link below for a map and address.

<http://www.uumc.org/?q=node/244>

Please bring any ideas, information on upcoming events in which you might be involved, or any resources you might be willing to share. All of our leadership meetings this year will be held on **Saturday mornings 10am – noon at University UMC**. Please save the dates for these future meetings:- **May 11, August 3, November 2**

I look forward to seeing you all this Saturday, and if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Blessings,
Jan Reed
University UMC

comps and then several years of dissertation writing. Rose is part of a team at school putting on an art show to raise money for **Hurricane Sandy** survivors, so that is keeping her busy. Vivian is involved in basketball at the YMCA and she and Rose both enjoy karate there as well. Talley is about as used to commuting into NYC as he'll ever be and excited to be working on a new client called GoGo squeeZ - an all-natural apple sauce in a pouch - that is flying off the shelves of **Whole Foods Markets** and other stores nationally.

Liz Nash left for **El Salvador** on **January 19** and returned on **January 25** (her birthday!). She spent most of the week in **Alegria**, where members of our church have gone on mission trips. Liz took school supplies, toothbrushes, and toothpaste. Since the person we work with in Alegria, **Oscar Rodriguez**, is no longer working for the church in San Salvador, Liz went there to see how to continue a future partnership and how to support the work in order to plan future mission trips. There will be a more detailed report in next month's **Visitor**.

It was good to catch up by phone with **Lois Drachenberg**. Because of continuing problems with her balance and the fact that she was living on her own, she and her late husband John's daughter Laurie decided that she would be better off--and safer--in an assisted living facility. Lois reports that she had had a very difficult adjustment, but just that day had found her way to feeling useful again. After having the flu on Christmas Day shortly after she moved in, she was finally well enough to meet with the activities director and talk about what she could do to keep busy. Those of you who remember Lois (she and John moved from Bastrop and our church several years ago) remember her wonderful readings that she loved to do. The activities director was delighted to hear of this talent (and her love of music) and has set her up with several women in the place who can no longer read on their own--and Lois will read to them several times a week. She is delighted with the idea! She has also met a woman there who plays the piano well and is hoping to broaden the music program. She has wonderful friends from her church who are picking her up and bringing her home from church and Laurie helps out, too. Lois will turn 88 on February 8. If you would like to send her a card, her new address is 439 Orange Avenue, Room 302, Altamonte Springs, Florida 32701. Her mobile number is 407-625-6288.

Near the end of October, **Marilyn Gaddis** and **George Carruthers** flew to **Washington, D. C.** The trip give George an opportunity to view the **World War II Memorial**, to read his war service record, and to visit with Marilyn's nephew and wife. While in the Capitol Mall area, they visited the **Korean** and the **FDR Memorials**.

They traveled out to the **Udvar-Hazy Air and Space Museum**, stood next to the awesome Space Shuttle "Discovery," and saw a **Focke-Wulf 190-F**, the type of plane that shot down **George's B-17** near Paris during WWII. George's great-nephew gave them a guided tour of the **Pentagon** after they had walked through the Memorial. Marilyn's nephew, a graduate of the **Naval Academy**, and his wife took them tailgating and to the Navy-Indiana Football Game (Navy won!). After the game, they went out to dinner with a high school classmate of Marilyn's who lives in **Annapolis**. On the way to the airport, they walked around the Mt. Vernon estate and museum. They arrived back in Austin just before **Superstorm Sandy** hit the East Coast, a close call indeed!

It was good to see **Bill and Carolyn Howe** in church on Sunday, Jan. 20. Carolyn reported that the recent rains in Central Texas (slow rain over a period of three days— heaven!) netted their rain harvesting system almost 8000 gallons of water. They get 2700 gallons from every inch of rain. On their property they have three buildings with roofs designed to catch the water. They have two different purification systems. One has two filters and a long UV light pipe which sterilizes the water and another under the sinks

Our former church intern in the 1980s, **David Cleaver-Bartholomew**, reports that his eldest daughter **Audrey** enjoyed her time at the **University of Iowa** last summer. She has applied and been accepted to the college of liberal arts (majoring in English; area of specialization — **Creative Writing English Honors Program**) for next year, and it continues to be her Number One choice. She and her mom **Dena** will be going out there Jan. 24-26 to meet with people and tour more of the campus on Jan. 25. Audrey is hoping one of her fellow students from last summer's writing program will be able to come up for the day, so that they can get together. It will also be good for Dena to see Iowa and where Audrey will quite likely be attending college in the fall. At some point in the future, it is hoped that faculty member **Beth Oakes** and her family can meet up with Audrey. Beth remembers David from his time as an intern here.

Longtime members of the church will remember **Eunice Paul** and her daughter **Lydia Tapley**. **Eunice** organized another marvelous Christmas at **Dean and Lydia's** home outside **Oxford, England**. All of the family except for Dean's brother and his partner were able to come, so there were 15 adults and Eunice's four great-grandchildren around the table. After Christmas Lydia had had keyhole surgery for a frozen shoulder. She is making excellent progress and doing her physical therapy religiously.



Mel and Pat Oakes with her brother Robert Winter at church-- 12/30/12. Robert, a musicologist and pianist from UCLA, filled in at the last minute for the service when Jonathan Geer was ill.

Mel and Pat Oakes enjoyed a wonderful post-Christmas visit with Pat's brother **Robert Winter**. While we were all distressed that our fabulous pianist **Jonathan Geer** was ill and could not play the piano for the service on the 30th of December, **Nodie** remembered that Robert was visiting and called at 8:45 a.m. that morning to see if he could/would fill in. He accepted the challenge and did a fine job. Thirty-five years in the UCLA music and musicology department certainly stood him in good stead!

Whit Bodman reported in late December, "I have been in a contemplative mood recently. It is not yet the new year and already I am looking back over the last 12 months. The high point, of course, was the wedding of our daughter, **Elizabeth**, in August, to a wonderful young man, **Greg**. Even though our family was totally trashed by **Greg's** family in the preceding kickball game, all was reconciled in a beautiful ceremony, on a beautiful day, with beautiful people, the most beautiful being, of course, my daughter, Elizabeth. But this is also the year that my car was totaled by another young man who ran a red light. I think he was electronically distracted. Miraculously, I was not totaled. That is the result, I think, of many years of government regulation that have required cars to be sturdier and safer. Score one for government (Take that, Tea Party!) And then this fall I had what I call "a little heart problem." I delivered myself, or rather my wife **Betty** delivered me, in the dark of night, to the emergency ward, and after that it was out of my hands. It is really very simple - open the chest, move some blood vessels around, and wire it all together again.. As the doctor said, 'We do this all the time.' The thing that disturbed me was being called a cabbage. After about - oh I don't know - the 20th time, I inquired about this. It is **Coronary Artery Bypass Graft - CABG**, hence cabbage. There is a whole garden called the cabbage ward. Much of this might lead one, in this case

me, to think a great deal about the fragility of life, but that has not been prominently on my mind. Rather, it all goes back to that wedding this summer. **Greg and Elizabeth**, in the traditional language that I insisted upon, pledged 'to live together in the covenant of marriage.' Betty and I uttered those exact same words more than 30 years ago. Millions have said those same words. 'Covenant' is an important word in our Congregational tradition. It is what makes a church as well as a marriage. It is something much more durable than a promise. It creates a 'coven,' a community of two in marriage, but not just the two; widening circles of friends and families are entwined and enjoined, even to play kickball, (or in spite of it.) I think most intensely about my own covenant of marriage. I rehearse the small print: to love, comfort, honor and keep. So much is nested in those words! This covenant has lasted through every stress and strain, every assault and reckless abandonment - how I don't know, but it has. This church, this little coven, has likewise endured over 100 years, also with stress and strain. One can claim all sorts of reasons for this - theological, economic, social and so on. To me it is covenant - Durable covenant - what **God** made with **Israel** in the Bible and we make with each other. Covenant (with small print). And there it is."



Two pretty ladies in red (left to right) Florence Castle and Nancy Brown, celebrated Epiphany at church on Jan. 6, 2013

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

Return Service Requested

Deadline for March Visitor — Feb. 21, 2013

Austin CROP Hunger Walk

It's not too late to get involved in the 2013 Austin **CROP Hunger Walk!** You do not want to miss out on participating in this walk, which is the largest interfaith event in Austin. You can start a

walk team with your friends, neighbors, coworkers, or spiritual community. Participating in the walk is a great way to help support local and global hunger agencies in their effort to fight hunger.

Walk materials can be picked up at the **Church World Service** office (call first—512-451-2062, 6633 Highway 290 East, Suite 108, Austin, TX 78723), the **Capital Area Food Bank** (M-F, 8AM-5PM, 8201 S. Congress Ave, Austin, TX 78745), **United Christian Church** (3500 West Parmer Lane, Austin, TX



78727), and **iACT** (call first - 512-386-9145 ext 308; 2921 E 17th Street, Building D, Suite 3, Austin, TX 78702).

The Austin CROP Hunger Walk will be at a new location - Camp Mabry (2200 W 35th St, Austin, TX 78703) on Sunday, March 3. Registration begins at 1:45 pm and the Grand Step-Off is at 2:30 pm. The walk is one day only this year, so please join us for the fun and festivities on March 3rd! For more detailed event information, please visit our website.

For questions or general inquiries, please contact the CROP Recruitment Coordinator, Desareé Williams, at 512 386 9145 ext 308 or info@austincrophungerwalk.org.