

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt



The season of Lent, traditionally a time for personal self-reflection and discernment, begins in a few weeks. This year, I invite you to participate with me in a series of personal reflections developed by the Jesuit priest, Anthony de Mello. The reflections consist of sixteen testimonials, and we'll gather to share our reflections on four testimonials per week for four weeks. On the fifth week, we'll do something a bit different. The testimonials are simple, but the more you reflect on your life, the deeper you can take them. Here's a schedule of the dates that we'll meet and the testimonials on which we'll reflect.

March 5

These things I have loved in life: things I have tasted, looked at, smelled, touched.

These experiences I have cherished:

These ideas have brought me liberation:

These beliefs I have outgrown:

March 12

These convictions I have lived by:

These are the things I have lived for:

These insights I have gained in the school of life: insights into God, the world, human nature, Jesus Christ, love, religion, prayer.

These risks I took, these dangers I have courted:

March 19

These sufferings have seasoned me:

These lessons life has taught me:

These influences have shaped my life: persons, occupations, books, events.

These scripture texts have lit my path:

March 26

These things I regret about my life:

These are my life's achievements:

These people are enshrined within my heart:

These are my unfulfilled desires:

April 2

Choose something that reflects your life—a poem, a prayer, a sketch, a photograph, a picture from a magazine, a work of art, lyrics from a song—anything that you judge to be a fitting conclusion to your testament, and share it with the group. Additional copies of the testimonials will be available in Fellowship Hall from now till the end of Lent. I look forward to gathering with you.

Socially Responsible Investing

Our church investments are held by United Church Funds (UCF), which engages in Socially Responsible Investing (SRI). What is SRI? It is the process of selecting companies to invest in that have sustainable and ethical environmental, social and governance practices, while challenging those that don't to amend their business strategies. UCF initiates regular discussions with key players around global justice issues. Along with encouraging the fund managers to invest responsibly, the heart of the program is in shareholder activism and using economic leverage to maintain ongoing corporate engagements. UCF recently released a SRI report – the following are samples of engagements that have seen a positive response:

- In an unusual move, the boards of BP and Shell requested that investors make them more accountable around their climate policies by supporting a resolution submitted by a global coalition of their shareholders, which included UCF.
- UCF filed resolutions to urge several fossil fuel companies to renounce their membership in the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), based on the group's detrimental anti-climate lobbying practices. Both Occidental Petroleum (Oxy) and Shell responded favorably by relinquishing their respective memberships.
- UCF is part of an ongoing investor dialog with Chevron on hydraulic fracturing risks.
- As part of an international group of investors, UCF had a dialogue regarding child labor in West African cocoa farms with food company Mondelez (Cadbury, Nabisco). The company has recently appointed a human rights consultant to assess Mondelez' cocoa initiatives in Ghana, Ivory Coast and Indonesia.
- The Hershey Company announced its plan to source 100% certified cocoa for all of its chocolate products by 2020. As of 2015, Hershey's was purchasing 10% certified cocoa, with the aim of increasing it to 40-50% by the end of 2016, and 100% by 2020. Hershey's is complementing this commitment by training farmers in West Africa in sustainable farming and providing education around practical and ethical issues, such as appropriate ages for children to work.

In addition to these engagement efforts, UCF has decided to open a new 'Impact Investment' fund in 2017. Impact Investing is another term for "inclusive finance", whereby capital is provided to people and places that have been typically un- or under-served by banks and other dominant economic structures. Through the Impact Investing Fund, UCF will contribute to levelling the playing field for economies that have traditionally been excluded from mainstream markets, enabling participation that is beneficial to their local community, and facilitating engagement on an international scale.



9/23/06 Giovanni Fracasso playing the violin at the church talent show

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

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.

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



1/15/17 Shaela and Bryan Rutherford (with daughters Naomi and Ena) joined the church and were welcomed with a cake during coffee hour--photo credit to Debby Kohrt

On Sunday, January 15, 2017, Shaela and Bryan Rutherford joined the church and were welcomed enthusiastically by the congregation. The children of the church led the welcome with signs made by Pastor Tom to prompt their good wishes. Bryan and Shaela grew up in Odessa, TX, although they did not meet until after high school. Bryan graduated from Rice University in Houston with degrees in physics, chemistry and English. He is presently working as a teacher at the Austin Tennis Academy teaching math and science. Shaela received her undergrad at UTPB in Odessa in art, and received her master's at UT Austin in art. She works part time at the Austin Tennis Academy as an art teacher. Her main art focus is ceramics and pottery. They both love being parents to Naomi, 4 1/2, and Ena, 2! They have a passion for the arts and music which led them here to Austin. We are so happy to welcome them as new members our church!

Don Miles celebrated midnight twice on New Year's Eve. The first was at Port St. Joe, Florida, in the Eastern Time Zone. The second was in Mexico Beach, Florida, in the Central Time Zone. Free trolleys and shuttle buses circulated among bars and hotels in the two adjacent towns, eliminating any need for driving or finding a parking space. It was his third time doing that, and he's looking for someone who might like to join him to ring in 2018. It's an

easy drive along I-10, stopping one night in each direction at hotels in Mississippi on the way there and Louisiana on the way back. Any takers? His email address is: donandmini@gmail.com.

Saturday afternoon at 2, January 14, 2017, brought about 40 folks to the church to honor the life of Greg Futch's mother Ferry Wynelle Newberne Futch. Ferry died at the end of November. Most of us never met her because she was already ill when she was moved here to a nursing home about 5 years ago. The service was led by Greg who, along with his brother Ronnie, welcomed friends from Greg's library days, friends from Trinity Church, and members of our congregation. The service was a unique mix of memorable stories told by Greg about his mom--and fabulous music from the trio. Tony Rodgers, Amy Harris, and Greg with Jonathan Geer accompanying sang a moving rendition of "Going to Take a Sentimental Journey," Amy Harris, our soprano/violinist, sang a glorious version (with Jonathan on the piano) of one of Ferry's favorites, "The Holy City," and Greg sang one more song with the trio celebrating Ferry's Georgia roots, "Georgia On My Mind." Cecile Adam shared some thoughts at the opening of the service and Tom VandeStadt gave the closing prayer. Everyone left feeling that they had gotten to know Ferry through Greg's loving words.



1/14/17 Greg Futch speaking about his mother Ferry Futch at her memorial service



Shannon Quisenberry, after many years away from the stage, will play a leading role, Meg Magrath, in City Theatre's upcoming production of *Crimes of the Heart*, a character study of three sisters who collectively deal with family problems and individual challenges. The show runs Thursdays-Sundays starting January 13th until February 5th. <http://citytheatreAustin.org/currentshow.html> church, ask them and they'll be happy to tell you all about it!

Joy Penitcuff is delighted with her new horse, Armani. Her husband Michael calls him "Our Money". Armani is a 15 year old thoroughbred gelding who has lots of experience competing in Hunter Classes at horse shows. He's very gentle and Joy thinks he's just perfect for her. Joy plans to begin competing in local Hunter shows in April, and will keep us posted on how that goes. For those who aren't familiar with horse show competition, Hunter Classes are a category of English riding competition in which horses and their riders are judged on form as they jump fences. Their form should be flowing and relaxed as they canter around an arena jumping relatively small jumps. This is different from Show Jumping, which is what you see in the Olympics, and is judged on speed as horses and their riders jump really big scary jumps. None of that for Joy! She has always been in the Hunter category.



12/16 Joy Penitcuff with her new horse, a hunter named Armani

Oldtimers from the church will remember Dennis Schneider, his wife Kazuko, and their daughter Takako who were with us in the late 1970s. The 3 of them settled in Tokyo where Dennis taught English at a university there. Sadly, Kazuko died from Alzheimer's in May of 2015 after a long illness. Dennis has retired and enjoys catching up with friends on Facebook. Takako lives on the West Coast with her 5-year-old son Kade. Dennis says that Takako and her husband Robert Spevak divorced several years ago and Kade's dad is a very involved parent. Takako has been teaching in a Japanese immersion school for about 15 years and this year kindergartener Kade is in her class for half of the day.

Heart of Texas Association News

February

by Liz Nash

Our Heart of Texas Association Spring Meeting date, time, and meeting place has been set. We will be gathering on **Sunday, April 23rd at Faith United Church in New Braunfels**. Registration begins at 3:00 pm, the meeting begins at 3:30 pm, and we will end with dinner. On the agenda so far is a program, a business meeting, and (most important) worship and fellowship together. As always, we will end with dinner. We are very aware of the driving distances for some in our churches, so we will be trying to end in time to keep at least most of us from driving in the dark. All from our churches are welcome and encouraged to join us.

Ernie Dean is our former Brazos Association Minister, former pastor and interim pastor at several of our churches, former leader of our Licensed Ministry training, and friend to many of us. He and Shirley, his wife, are moving from their home of many years in Austin to Westminster, a senior living center in central Austin. Their address, as of the week of January 22nd, is 4100 Jackson Ave, Apt. 406, Austin, Texas 78731. Their phone numbers, which are staying the same, are (512) 477-5390 (home) and (512) 659-9526 (cell). Although they are not as mobile as they once were and can't get to our gatherings, Ernie wants to be sure we know how to reach them and to encourage people to keep in touch. Ernie and Shirley have given a great deal to many of our churches and ministers, and I encourage you to reach out to them.

As Bethany Congregational Church in San Antonio held their farewell service for retiring pastor Gerry Metzger, they surprised him with a real honor. The church named him their pastor emeritus, a way of expressing gratitude for his substantial ministry. As Gerry leaves, Bethany has called Rev. Dr. Thomas (Tom) Robinson as their interim. Our prayers for a full and faithful ministry go with Bethany at this important time.

Our prayers, too, for a joyous beginning to their retirement, go with Charles and Bonnie Stark, who moved at the end of the year from their home of many years at Slumber Falls to their new home near Coupland.

One more joyous beginning in the Heart of Texas Association has been the start of weekly Sunday morning worship for Open Cathedral, our new church start in Leander. They are meeting at Camacho Elementary at 10 am on Sundays, and would welcome all of us and any friends we would send over to their inclusive ministry, with its core beliefs of Open Minds, Open Hearts, and Open Faith. The first worship was Christmas Eve, and the first Sunday worship (with children as a third of the congregation) was on January 8th. Our prayer and hopes for a growing and vibrant ministry go with Open Cathedral and their minister, Ryan Hart.

Blessings in Christ,

Liz Nash

Heart of Texas Association Minister

You Are Invited to the Micah 6 Food Pantry Dedication February 19

In 2016, the Session of University Presbyterian Church approved a request from the Micah 6 Board of Directors to dedicate the food pantry here at UPC as the **"Micah 6 Dan Robertson Food Pantry."**

Always a leader and always committed to making the world a better place, Dan was active in the Girl Scouts, becoming Council President for 6 years. He was a Deacon at University Presbyterian Church and served as President of the Micah 6 of Austin board of directors for several years prior to his death in 2015. Micah 6 is a consortium of churches providing a food food pantry for those who need assistance, and a Street Youth Outreach program. As President, Dan tried to follow the charge to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

Please join the Micah 6 board, staff, and volunteers, along with Dan's family, **Sunday, February 19, at 1:00 p.m. in the Great Hall at University Presbyterian Church, 2203 San Antonio Street**, as they celebrate his service and dedicate the food pantry to his memory.

Free parking in the UT Co-op Garage. All are welcome!

Feel free to edit as necessary and to use the attached images in promoting this event.

Personals (continued)

by Pat Oakes

The peripatetic Nash family was roaming the world again over the holidays. While Annie was working as a ski-slope photographer in Steamboat Springs, CO -- her busiest time of year--and Becky was visiting friends in California, Liz and Reuel embarked on a Rhine River cruise from Basel, Switzerland, to Amsterdam which they had booked some time ago. They visited the Black Forest, Strasbourg, Colmar, Koblenz, and Cologne, and saw 19 castles in the Rhine River Gorge from the boat. Ellie (in India with husband Louis) realized they could fly from India to Paris and make their way through Belgium to meet her folks in Amsterdam. They spent a couple of extra days there -- Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh Museum, and the Anne Frank house -- then took a train to Berlin for five days. Berlin has been a "bucket list" item for the senior Nashes. and they were delighted to have Ellie and Louis along for the adventure. They did a great guided walking tour, visited an intact section of the Berlin Wall, the German History Museum, and heard Beethoven's Ninth Symphony performed at the Berliner Dom. Christmas markets all along the entire trip! Christmas market overload! Louis and Reuel picked up a cold prior to Berlin and stayed indoors for a couple of things. Ellie and Liz went to the long section of the Berlin Wall that is still standing (about a mile long) that is painted with murals from artists from many countries. It's called the East Side Gallery - all just outside along the wall remnant by the Spree River. The Nashes knew to do that because a friend of Becky's came and stayed at their house in December after finishing an internship semester learning about refugees in Berlin, and she told them a few things to do that are not so much on the tourist route. Ellie, Louis, and Liz went to the Deutscher Dom, the Protestant German church near their hotel. Liz is not at all sure it is a functioning church now, but the dome part is a several level display of the history of German democracy, from the democracy movement in the German states in the mid 1800s, through Bismarck and the formation of a unified German state, through the problematic leadership of Kaiser Wilhelm II leading them into WWI, through the Weimar Republic, and then the path to power of the Nazis. History ignored is likely to be history that rears its ugly head again. This is the time to

consider such a story carefully. Liz won't say more except that she wishes Americans would be so open about the parts of our history we would rather pretend never happened, and what led to them. Ellie and Louis went back to India (where they are working) from Prague, then took a 15 hour bus ride to Paris (Ellie says Louis saved the whole bus by confronting their driver about his texting, and the two African men behind them were heavily interrogated by the police at 1:30 a.m.!) plus a day spent sleeping in a hotel in Paris plus a final round of wine and beer and hummus and olives and baguettes plus a flight to Muscat plus a flight to Delhi) they made it to their new AirBnB in south Delhi. They like their setup -- they have a nice big 15x15ish room with lots of closet space, a bathroom (with hot water AND a shower head that they don't have to hold over themselves!), and a little utility space that has a washing machine reserved for only their use. The washing machine is its own beast, though. It is entirely plastic, doesn't close, drains the water directly onto the floor, and the "dryer" is actually a 5-minute spinner. It has a remarkably steep learning curve in Ellie's opinion but the capacity to be in charge of their own laundry is awesome.

History Corner

by Pat and Mel Oakes

This is not quite history, but in a way it is. Thanks to our indefatigable choir director and talent show organizer Nodie Murphy, the church has enjoyed almost annual talent shows over the past 10-12 years. The upcoming talent show is Friday evening, Feb. 24th, starting with a soup supper at 6 and followed by a variety of acts at 7 or so. The talent shows are a moderate fund raiser and a fantastic community building activity. As you can see from the pictures below, folks of all ages have participated over the years. It is really easy to tell that time has passed when you look at the pictures of the youngest participants.

(Photos on page 8)

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

March Visitor Deadline—February 24, 2017

History Corner

by Pat and Mel Oakes



2/5/10 Before the talent show, Norma Hawes and Joe McMillan enjoyed great soup--ARRRRGH



3/4/11 Bill Mueller, Dennis Murphy, and Jaime Hadley did a great job cleaning up after the talent show



3/4/11 Nodie Murphy, Cathy Hubbs (using the walker for a fun effect--not for real!), with musicians Terry Heller and Rambie Briggs, WhitBodman holding the lamp, and Vic Appel looks on.



9/23/06 Bill Beardall with his guitar--talent show



9/23/2006--church talent show with Emily and Tess Howicz.