

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt



Toward the end of February, a contingent of Austin-area UCC clergy delivered to Texas Governor, Gregg Abbott, a letter calling on the Governor to cease his efforts to prohibit the citizens of Texas from offering hospitality and safety to Syrian refugees that have been properly vetted by the Federal Government. Members of the Congregational Church of Austin, UCC, wrote the letter, the South Central Conference circulated it to all the UCC churches in Texas, and 1, 676 people signed it. The clergy who delivered the letter included Revs. Tom VandeStadt, Elizabeth Nash, and Whit Bodman (Congregational Church of Austin), John Gage, Nikki Stahl, and Anna Humble (United Christian Church), Mary Wilson (Church of the Savior), and Sid Hall (Trinity Church of Austin).

The letter reads as follows.

Dear Governor Abbott,

We are members of Christian churches located throughout Texas that are affiliated with the United Church of Christ. We are adding our voices to the growing number of Texans who are opposed to your efforts to prohibit the citizens of Texas from offering hospitality and safety to Syrian refugees that have been vetted by the Federal Government.

Throughout our history, the United Church of Christ has squarely faced and responded to our world's reigning fears, prejudices, injustices, and conflicts with a spirit of love, justice, and wisdom. Our church has always cared for and comforted people ravaged by natural disasters and human conflicts. Many of our local churches have sponsored and cared for refugees from other parts of the world. We are deeply committed to this ministry because our scripture teaches us to love justice, to provide hospitality to sojourners and exiles who are far from home, and to care for all people who are suffering as if they were Jesus Christ himself. Rather than succumbing to fear or prejudice, our faith in God enables us to open our hearts, our hands, our homes, and our pocketbooks to those who need our help. Today, Syrian refugees desperately need our help, and we intend to help them to the fullest extent possible.

Please stop using fear-based messaging and legal obstacles to prevent Syrian refugees from finding safe refuge in Texas. Please join us in showing Syrian refugees just how caring, compassionate, and hospitable Texans can be.

Church Announcements

Please help us serve **hot meals to the homeless** over the winter months. The **Homeless Ministry Team** is once again seeking contributions of **frozen meals** that can be reheated for serving at either **Front Porch Lunch or the Freeze Night Shelter**. Prepared meals should serve about 25 hungry people, and anything that freezes and reheats will work great – casseroles, pasta dishes, chili, etc. Please place your dishes in disposable roasting tins, cover with foil, freeze and tape a note to it indicating your name, the dish, and any reheating instructions. Then bring it to church either on Sunday or during office hours to be placed in one of the downstairs freezers. Contact **John Goff** (goff@ig.utexas.edu) with any questions. Thanks!

The Front Porch Lunch ministry is in need of a few more volunteers to serve lunches. Lunch is served to area homeless (mostly LifeWorks 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:

Micah 6 Youth Drop-in Center -
<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.

Some Christian Education Opportunities Over the Horizon

We have some interesting, and hopefully, inspiring Christian Education opportunities coming up after the New Year.

In the season of Epiphany, **Rev. Dr. Van Herd** will lead a reading and reflection of the book, *Honest to Genesis, a Biblical and Scientific Challenge to Creationism*, by Dr. Margaret Gray Towne. Dr. Towne says of her book: "My book is written for everyone...theologians and pastors who are not as trained in science, and scientists who have not been trained in biblical hermeneutics. I have tried to make these subjects understandable to everyone."

In the Season of Lent, Rev. Dr. Jo Jensen, Rev. Cecile Adam, and Rev. Tom VandeStadt will lead a series of reflections on where and how we experience (or don't experience) God in our everyday lives, based on the book, *My Bright Abyss*, by poet Christian Wiman. The series will not be a book discussion in which we critique the book. Rather, Jo, Cecile, and Tom will lift themes from the book for deeper reflection and discussion.

Church Leadership

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

Personals

by Pat Oakes

It is with sadness that we report that **Suzanne Vanderpoel** died on **February 8**. She was peaceful, and she had family and **Cecile Adam** by her side. Though she hasn't been active in church lately, Suzanne was a long-time member and very active for many years. She served on the **Search Committee** that called our pastor, **Tom VandeStadt**, to the church, was for years the hostess for our fellowship time, and was committed to interfaith dialogue and cooperation, particularly with Muslims. Please keep Suzanne's family in your thoughts and prayers, and extend thanks to Cecile for ministering to Suzanne at the end of her life.



Suzanne Vanderpoel on moving day for remodel, July 2006.

Carol and Fred Scott share their good news from **Kansas**. Fred's son and daughter-in-law's baby, **Ivan Frederick Scott**, arrived by Caesarian on **August 7, 2015**. Ivan was about 5 months when the photo was taken. They are finding it delightful to watch him grow. They took one wonderful trip to **New York** to visit Carol's older daughter & her husband and attend some plays. They hope to visit TX

this year. Carol and Fred stay active at the **UCC Colonial Church** near **Kansas City**. Carol is on a busy Justice committee and in charge of a monthly Fair Trade coffee and chocolate sale.



Former member Fred Scott with his grandson Ivan Frederick Scott

Lisa Kirch reports that news about her **Fulbright** hit her inbox while she was in the middle of answering a faculty member's message about office hours. She was so shocked that crying and Facebook were the only immediate responses. A little while later she notified the chair, dean, and provost, and the next morning got out of her 8 AM class to find e-mail from the university president and voicemail from the director of communications. She a) never thought she'd get this; then b) didn't think anyone would really care except those who love her. Wrong! The grant is pure research, no teaching, although she'll give presentations to students at the **University of Munich**. The topic is the origin of museums. She'll be co-editing an annotated, illustrated, dual-language edition of a very early collection inventory. The edition will include papers by collaborators, people with different specializations, many of whom have already committed to the project. These people are being brought in because the collection holds so many different types of objects: paintings, prints, sculptures, but also astronomical instruments, alchemical

materials, preserved flora and fauna, and mineral samples. All of the people working on this will get together for a conference in **Germany** next year. Lisa is co-organizing that, too, and the translation will be hers. They want this source available to a really wide audience, and they want to encourage young scholars to tackle archival work.



Rimma's family had an amazing time reuniting aboard the Regal Princess, Jan 24-31

Our Office Manager, **Rimma Aguirre**, recently came back from a family reunion trip. 26 people total from **Austin, Chicago, Hartford, New York, and Miami** met in **Fort Lauderdale, FL** and sailed on a week-long Caribbean cruise together aboard the **Regal Princess** on **January 24**. Several occasions were being celebrated that week. Rimma's parents, **Dina** and **Aron**, turned 60 and 70, respectively. Rimma's husband, **Joe**, turned 30. Rimma's cousin, **Alex**, turned 40. Three wedding anniversaries were also celebrated during the trip. The cruise ports were **Princess Cays, Bahamas; St. Thomas; and the Dutch side of St. Maarten**. Rimma hadn't seen many of her East Coast relatives since her wedding 8 years ago! She reports that the trip was fun, relaxing, and everything she hoped it would be!

Most of you know that **Pat Oakes** had back surgery on **January 23**. That surgery was successful but later the screws shattered one vertebrate because of osteoporosis, causing great pain. Hopefully Pat had further surgery on **February 25**. Her surgeon was **Dr. Rick Wupperman**, a relative of the Wupperman family, long-time and long-ago members of this church. Pat's sister, **Nancy Hatch**, from **Cortland, NY**, was in Austin for a week and was a great support for Pat and **Mel**. Pat appreciates all your prayers, cards, and good wishes. Many thanks to Nancy for typing most of this column for Pat.

Once again, the amazing and varied talents of the **Congregational Church of Austin** were showcased with the talent show (organized by **Nodie Murphy**) which was held on **Friday, Feb. 7**. A soup supper was held at 6, followed by the show. Soups were contributed by **Nodie Murphy, Sara Ross, Jaime Hadley** and the **Briggses**. The mistress of ceremonies was **Lynne Lemley**, **Jaime Hadley** was the audio expert, **Jonathan Geer** was the accompanist, **Dave Ross** was the photographer, and **Janet Burns** organized the beverages and other accoutrements. There were two major requirements for participants --acts had to be family friendly and could last no longer than 3 minutes! Participants included the choir with opening and closing numbers, **Don Miles, Chencho Flores, Bill Mueller, Beth Placek, Betty Bodman, Cathy Hubbs, Tess Howicz, Barbara Burnham, Jonathan Geer and Tony Rogers, Caleb Parkhill, Juliet and Scarlett Quisenberry, Jim Howicz, Dave Ross, Zooney and Jason Parkhill, Bill Beardall, Harrison Tucker, Jaime Hadley, Mel Oakes, Savannah Tucker, Chuck Jackson, Katie Lemley, Dennis Murphy, and Isabella, John, and Francesca Dietz**. A goal of the gathering was to raise funds for the **Palestinian student** we sponsor in **Jerusalem**. It had been hoped that \$300.00 would be raised, but the grand total was \$352.00.



The choir: Greg Futch, Cathy Hubbs, Norma Hawes, Dennis Murphy, Sara Ross, Don Miles, Barbara Burnham, Jason Parkhill, Katie Lemley, Nodie Murphy



Jonathan Geer and Tony Rogers singing "I am a poor wayfaring stranger"



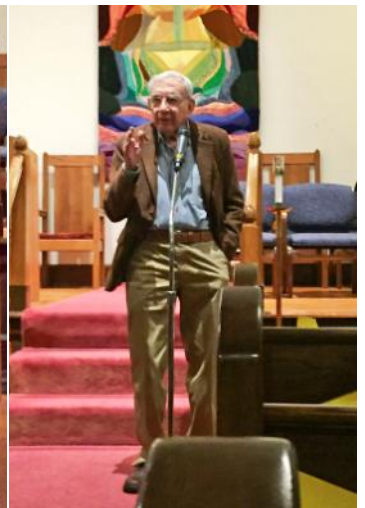
Savanna Tucker reading a school entrance essay



Katie Lemley tap. She moved too fast for me!



Chencho Flores, legendary accordionist and fiancé of Beth Placek. Beth told me they will be married at the White Horse by Van Herd, possibly with a real white horse. She said he wasn't feeling well and wasn't up to his usual level at the show, but he sounded great to me. He has been playing since 1943!



Bill Mueller with a long joke.



Robin Rosson, "When I'm 64" from the Beatles



Don Miles with General Ignacio Zaragoza, the hero of Cinco de Mayo. The General joined the choir but seemed to have lost his voice.



Beth Placek dancing



Barbara Burnham telling a homespun story.



Chuck Jackson reciting a poem



Dennis Murphy reciting Milton, the opening of "Paradise Lost."



Jim Howicz describing his chicken recipe. Copies are available.



Bill Beardall singing "I don't get around much any more"



Dave Ross explaining conic sections - ellipse, hyperbola, and parabola. (Photo by Sara Ross)



Harrison Tucker with Yo-yo



Zooe Parkhill



Caleb Parkhill



Isabella, John, and Francesca Dietz

Heart of Texas Association News

March

by Liz Nash

You are all invited and encouraged to come to our Spring Heart of Texas Association meeting, to be held at the lovely worship site of Hope United Church in Georgetown on Sunday, April 3rd, beginning at 3:30 pm (registration at 3 pm) and lasting through dinner. We look forward to having the joyous opportunity to vote for full standing for this United Church of Christ/Disciples of Christ church start that we have prayed for, helped support, and regarded as one among us. The meeting will be at the Heritage Oaks Clubhouse, 702 Heritage Oaks Bend, Georgetown. For those coming on I 35, you can get there by exiting to the west on Williams Dr., turning right at Shell (which is DB Wood toward the left), taking the 2nd left on Verde Vista, and going into the community center parking area on the right. Those who wish to avoid the I 35 traffic through Austin can come on the 130 toll road and turn south on I 35 in Georgetown for the short drive to the Williams Dr. exit. I invite you to take a look at their website, <http://www.hopegeorgetown.org/>, to learn more about the giving and welcoming ministry of Hope United. What a tremendous privilege it will be to welcome our 2nd church in a year to this Association. Let's give thanks to God together as we celebrate.

We are in the middle of planning transportation to the National Youth Event (NYE) for our Association youth groups -- ages 13 through 18 -- and their chaperones. NYE, with the theme "Believe" based on Hebrews 11:1, will be held July 26th through 30th at the Coronado Springs Resort at Disneyworld. This gathering of several thousand youth from all over the US is, in my experience, an outstanding opportunity for our youth to know what our church is about, with tremendous worship, youth speakers whose lives are truly inspiring, opportunities for workshops and service, opportunities to meet many people from around the country, and the promise of fun together.

Registration is open until May 27th, and each church should register its own group. All the information you need about the event itself is at <http://www.uccpages.org/nye/>. Our stewardship in setting aside money every year for this event will "pay off" in the travel scholarships we can offer. Although we will not know the exact amount per person until all have registered, we anticipate being able to cover \$150 or more of the travel costs of those going from Association funds and a donation from our South Central Conference. I am in the process right now of contacting and working with churches on transportation, either by plane or by van, who will be sending youth. If you have a group planning to attend, please be in touch with me (lizknash@gmail.com or 512-799-2782) if you have not been already, so we can work together.

On February 20th, many of us gathered at St. Peter's Church of Coupland to celebrate the life of Mary Johnson, wife of Jewel Johnson. Mary passed away at their home in Leander, surrounded by her family, on February 16th. Mary and Jewel served St. Peter's twice (he is Pastor Emeritus there), St. John's Burton, St. John's Richland, Trinity Niederwald, and churches outside our Association. These fine people are beloved by many -- our hearts and prayers go out to Jewel and to the family.

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash
Heart of Texas Association Minister

History Corner

by Pat and Mel Oakes

Over the course of the church's history we have had pastors who served long tenures and some that passed through briefly. This month we thought one of the short termers might be of interest. Many of the pastors went on to a variety of distinguished careers inside and outside of the church. Here we feature John Wesley Harbeson who served from June 1, 1919 to September 1, 1919. John was born in Farmington, Iowa to a blacksmith. He was educated at The University of Kansas and was an accomplished debater. Following graduation he was appointed school superintendent in Perry, Kansas. He married Lilla May Hay in 1915. Serving several Kansas school district, John began preaching at Methodist churches. Returning to school, John earned an MA in 1916 at Columbia and was active in the Broadway Tabernacle Church. He next served as pastor of the Central Congregational Church in Kansas City, Kansas. He was a strong advocate for Armenian refugees.

In June, 1919, the *Lawrence Daily Journal* wrote, "John W. Harbeson, who has been superintendent of the city schools here for the past few years, has gone to Austin, Texas, to make his future home. Mr. Harbeson has been studying for the ministry and will have charge of a Congregational church at that place."

Several factors contributed to Harbeson's short term as pastor. Rev. Dr. R. J. Briggs, though in very bad health, was still playing an important role, limiting Harbeson's initiatives. Austin church records also reveal that John's wife was suffering from poor health associated with dental problems. She felt she was letting the church down. He considered resigning and the church leaders convinced him to change his mind, however he finally decided that he could not carry out his duties in the present atmosphere. He resigned as of September 1, 1919 and the family moved to Chicago, near the U. of Chicago, where he could continue his studies in education. He took graduate courses, however he accepted a position with Pasadena High School in 1920. In 1931, John earned a Ph.D from the University of Southern California.

Pasadena High School became Pasadena City Col-

lege and Harbeson became the first dean. He had a distinguished career in education.

The 1962 Pasadena City College yearbook wrote,

'On March 27, 1962, death took one of Pasadena's most beloved citizens. Dr. John Wesley Harbeson was a man honored and respected by all who knew him.'

'He has left his mark on Pasadena City College in many ways. When PJC was founded in 1924, Dr. Harbeson became its first dean. In 1927 he accepted the position of principal and served in that capacity until he retired in June, 1950.'

'In addition to being principal, Dr. Harbeson was active in many other fields of educational work. He served on the board of trustees of the American Association of Junior Colleges and was president of the organization in 1942-43. He was first vice-chairman of the American Council on Education.'

'Dr. Harbeson was the only junior college educator ever to sit on the executive committee of the Department of Higher Education of the National Education Association. He also assisted the government in 1946 as a member of a group studying the United States Armed Forces Institute.'

'With the late Dr. John A. Sexson, Dr. Harbeson co-authored the book, "The New American College". In addition he was a regular contributor to the *California Journal of Secondary Education* and other scholarly publications.'

'Admiration for Dr. Harbeson showed itself in 1951 when 650 students secured approval of the Board of Education to name PCC's new library after him.'

'Active in community life, the educator was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, the Scottish Rite, the Pasadena University Club, the New Century Club, St. James Methodist Church, and a past member of the Corona Masonic Lodge.'

'Dr. Harbeson's influence will remain with PCC in the years to come, for a man of such inspiration will never be forgotten.'

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Return Service Requested

March Visitor Deadline—March 23, 2015

Continued from page 6



Juliet Quisenberry



Scarlett Quisenberry