

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

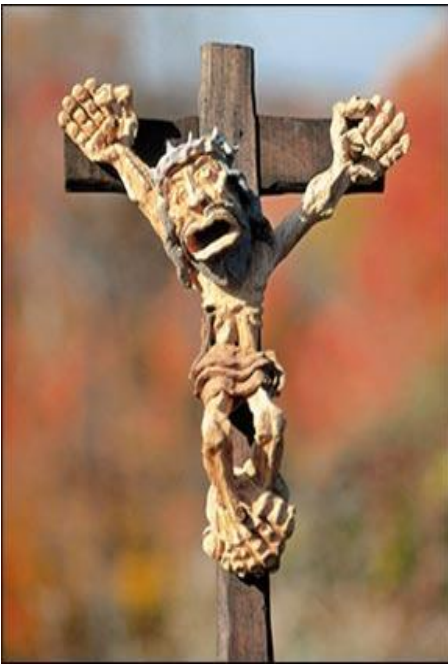
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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt

Rev. John Towery, Pastor Emeritus



As Christians, we place our faith in **Jesus Christ**, who nailed to the cross and dying called out to God, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Jesus uttered this prayer on behalf of the unrepentant perpetrators of his death, but many Christians interpret his words as a prayer for the entire human race: “forgive them, all of them, every last one, even the unrepentant, for they know not what they do.”

Peter once asked Jesus how many times he should forgive. Seven times? Jewish teachers taught that as a rule of thumb people should forgive three times. When Peter suggested seven he more than doubled that number, no doubt thinking he was being exceedingly generous. But Jesus answered, “not seven times, but seventy times seven.” In other words, forgive indefinitely. There is never a last time to forgive.

Forgiveness may lead us to the heart of Christian faith, but it is incredibly difficult to practice. It is hard to forgive people who have hurt us, especially if they feel no remorse. It can be even harder to forgive people who have hurt those we love, especially if the injured party is our child. Jesus knew himself as God’s child, God’s “beloved son.” He called God, *abba*, father. And with his last dying breath, he begged his father to forgive those who were hurting him and taking his life.

Lance Stone writes, “it hurts to forgive. It hurts to lay down that sense of grievance and resentment. If we are to forgive, something in us must die—and that is a very painful death, as if something in us is being ruptured and torn. We speak about the Christian life as one that involves taking up the cross, and here we encounter the cross—in the sheer pain of forgiving.”

H.R. McIntosh writes, “forgiveness is a voyage of anguish for the forgiver.” Reflecting on McIntosh’s words, Stone adds that “part of that anguish is the suspicion that to forgive is somehow to condone evil. To forgive is to fail to punish wrongdoing, and that can never be right...we can not allow evil to win, and forgiveness seems to risk that...we fear that to forgive is to allow evil to triumph.”

On the cross, nails piercing his hands, crown of thorns digging into his flesh, final breath gasping from his lips, Jesus Christ confronts us with a disconcerting, risky, mysterious reality—God forgives. Seventy times seven times. Never a last time. Even the unrepentant. In the face of recurring evil.

In his teaching ministry, Jesus Christ confronts us with another disconcerting, risky, mysterious reality—we too must forgive. We acknowledge this every Sunday when we pray, “Our Father, who art in heaven...forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.”

It is in forgiving others that we may encounter the pain of Jesus Christ’s cross and the reality of God’s presence most directly in our own lives, but it is in forgiving others that we may also experience the mystery of God’s resurrection of Jesus Christ to new life. At its very deepest and most profound level, this is what Christian faith is really about—new life arising out of the pain and death of an old life.

Holy Week Schedule

Sunday, April 13, 11:00 am, Palm/Passion Sunday Service

In this service, we follow the progression of events in which crowds hail Jesus as the messiah as he enters Jerusalem, and the authorities arrest him, put him on trial, and crucify him.

Friday, April 18, 7 pm, Good Friday Service

In this service, we commemorate the last supper Jesus shared with his disciples, and then mourn his death on the cross by extinguishing our Advent and Christ candles.

Sunday, April 20, 6:45 am, Easter Sunrise Service

In this service, we gather on the shore of Lady Bird Lake at sunrise to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ with singing and prayer.

Sunday, April 16, 11:00 am, Easter Service and Celebration Feast

In this service, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ by transforming the cross from an instrument of death to a symbol of new life by covering it with fresh flowers. The service is followed by a special fellowship time.

CCA Yard Sale

Please support our church's on-going relationship with communities in El Salvador by supporting the **CCA YARD SALE for our EL SALVADOR MISSION**. This will be an all-church spring yard sale on **Saturday, April 26** to raise money to relieve hunger in Salvadoran communities whose crops were destroyed by a volcanic eruption. Please bring any small items to the church Fellowship Hall from now through Easter Sunday. If you have furniture or other large items to donate, please contact Jaime at 512-731-4621 to make arrangements. Also let Jaime or Beth Gleason know if you would like to volunteer to help transport collected items to the sale on April 25, or to work at the sale on April 26.

Lenten Silence

Once again this year, we'll be observing silence during the beginning our worship serviced during the season of Lent. During the Season of Lent, please enter the sanctuary and prepare yourself for worship in silence. Use the silence and stillness as a time for personal reflection and prayer. Shortly after 11 am, the Trio will begin playing a reflective piece. If at this time you would like to tie a prayer cloth to the prayer net, please do.

Hill Country Ride for Aids

It's that time of year again—**Hill Country Ride for AIDS** preparation. "Preparation" means **George Hetrick, Robin Chapman, and Tom VandeStadt** are enduring strong shifting winds and wildly mercurial temperatures as they log miles on their bikes in order to complete the challenging **HCRA** course in **April**. "Preparation" also means fundraising. The HCRA is a fundraiser for a number of organizations in central Texas that provide support to people living with **AIDS**.

The **Care Communities of Austin** is one of those organizations. Our church now has two Care Communities "Care Teams," and George, Robin, and Tom will once again be riding on the Care Communities Cycling Team on April 26th. If you'd like to support the fundraising efforts of George, Robin, or Tom, please go to **hillcountryride.org** and click the link for supporting a participant. Type in the name of the person you'd like to support and follow the instructions. If you prefer, you can write a check to **Hill Country Ride for AIDS** with the name of the participant you're supporting in the memo and give the check to Tom at church. He'll take care of the rest. George, Robin, and Tom thank you for the many years you've supported them in this effort, and for your continued support this year.

Church Leadership

Trustees Chair	John Goff
Deacons Chair	Jaime Hadley
Outreach Team	Marilyn Vaché & Warinda Harris
Moderator	Barbara Burnham & Bill Beardall
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Pam Tucker
Christian Education	Rachel Dietz
Coordinators	Martin Garrison
Clerk	Betty Bodman
Historian	Pat Oakes

Personals by Pat Oakes

Our extended church family suffered a great loss on March 23rd with the passing of **Eleanor Towery**, the wife of **John Towery** (our pastor for 30 years, from 1959-1989). Eleanor was bright, funny, lively, hardworking, and a joy to be around. She had a great laugh and was full of love for everyone—and wasn't shy about expressing it. Eleanor had been in ill health (untreatable breast cancer) for some months. **Mary Towery Masters** and **Ches Towery** have seen Eleanor often, but daughter **Sally Towery Johnson** had been unable to come from the Boston area due to ill health herself. Sally was finally able to come for a visit, arriving on Wednesday evening, the



Eleanor Towery in 1979 at the celebration of John's 20th year as pastor of this church.

19th, On March 20th, Mary and Sally had a wonderful visit with John and Eleanor. Eleanor was sitting up, aware, participating in the conversation, and repeatedly telling Sally how wonderful it was to see her. They sang songs, gave Eleanor a manicure, and remembered happy times. On Friday, Mary and Sally got a call from **The Cottages at Chandler Creek** that Eleanor had taken a sudden turn for the worse. When Sunday came, she was with John, Mary, Sally, and Ches's wife Maggie. Mary says that her passing was very peaceful. John understands what has happened and knows how lucky they were to be together for more than 63 years. He was recently admitted to hospice care where he and Eleanor have been living for several years. Keep the whole family in your prayers. Services for Eleanor were held on March 27th at Cook-Walden Capital Parks Funeral Home.

Sunday, March 9, was a day of special celebration at the church when we honored our long-time custodian, **Victor Cardenas**, for his approximately ten years of service. Victor, who works full time as a custodian at **Paredes Middle School**, has been an invaluable member of the church



Tom VandeStadt introduces Victor Cardenas, our stellar custodian and his family at the coffee hour honoring him. l-r George Lemley, Vanessa, Lupita, and Victor Cardenas, Tom VandeStadt, Don Brown (Caleb Parkhill in the foreground)

staff. Several members extolled his many talents and the extra care he gives to the church plant. As many of you know, the basement has a tendency to flood and Victor has been there to get it pumped out—even drafting his son to help. It was good to see **George Lemley** at church that Sunday as he was responsible for finding Victor for us. Victor's wife knew George and heard about the position, recommended her husband for the job, he was interviewed, got the job--and we all have been benefitting ever since. We all thank you, Victor, for keeping our gem of a church gleaming.

Seven-year-old **Juliet Quisenberry** substituted for her mother in singing the national anthem at a race in **Lakeway** on **March 1st**. Her mom **Shannon** sang at the same race last year. This year Juliet really wanted to do it with her, so Shannon thought they could do it together. After some joint practicing (and after Juliet learned the lyrics at school), it just seemed clear the audience would like it better if she went solo. She was pumped! She did a fantastic job and didn't seem the least bit nervous. You can watch Juliet's performance here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wv2t8xyj0Y&feature=youtu.be> Her twin sister Scarlett admitted that she slept in that morning instead of going to the race. (see photo on page 5)

Brazos Association News

April

by Liz Nash

Our **Brazos Association Spring Meeting** is coming up on **Sunday, April 6th. St. Peter's Church of Coupland** will be our host church, with the meeting beginning at 3 pm and lasting through dinner. On the agenda is the **Ecclesiastical Council for Martin Garrison**, reporting from our General Synod delegates, a business meeting, and the important time we spend sharing news of our churches and fellowship among our churches as we renew and strengthen our ties. St. Peter's postponed hosting the meeting last spring because they were rebuilding their kitchen and fellowship hall. Now, they have a great facility that we will get to enjoy for the first time as they extend their hospitality to all of us. I hope many of you will join us in the lovely Texas country springtime. Please RSVP to St. Peter's as soon as possible (512-856-2433 or spcoupland@eccwireless.com) so they will have an accurate meal count. Look for Martin's ordination paper to be sent via email to your church, Association ministers, and Association board and committee members. I encourage those of you who receive his paper to share it beforehand with all who will be participating in his Council.

At our spring Association meeting, we will also be discussing plans for the **South Central Conference Annual Meeting, June 6th-8th**, at **Camp Allen** in the **Navasota** area, hosted this year by the Brazos Association. **Linda Coats**, our hardworking retreat committee chair, will share what has been done so far and how our church members can help. We are excited about the opportunity to be in this beautiful retreat center which will allow people to both meet in excellent facilities and have the chance for prayer and reflection. You will be able to register for Annual Meeting on the **South Central Conference** website, <http://www.sccucc.org/>. For those ministers who need to attend boundary training on June 6th, see the SCC e-news about how to register or contact me to find out.

Darrin Holub was installed as pastor of **Lyons Evangelical** and **Friedens Gay Hill** churches on a very chilly, wet afternoon on Sunday, March 2nd. The day was cold but the worship, music, welcome and fellowship were warm at the Lyons church. We rejoice with these churches and with Darrin and his family on their renewed ministry together.

Church of the Savior in **Cedar Park** jumped at the last minute opportunity to host an evening of sharing and worship on **March 10th** with three brothers from the Taizé community during the preparation time for the **Taizé Pilgrimage of Trust** recently held in Austin. The evening at Church of the Savior was a very special gathering of people from several Austin area churches across denominations, including our UCC churches, to hear the story of **Taizé** and the witness of the brothers, and to join in the

beautiful Taizé worship of singing, prayer, and silence. It was a marvelous evening that happened because of the church's willingness to extend their hospitality, with **Ron Trimmer's** help in the search for the musicians so important to this form of worship. The **Pilgrimage of Trust** for young adults will be held in **Dallas-Ft. Worth, April 4th to 6th** and in **Houston, April 25rd to 27th**. It is an unparalleled spiritual opportunity. (One of my daughters just went to the one in Austin and had a great experience.) For more information, see http://www.taize.fr/en_article15814.html.

Dan DeLeon led confirmands from several of our Association and Conference churches at **Confirmation Camp at Slumber Falls, March 21st-23rd**. He asked the youth, in many different ways, "What am I saying yes to?" by encouraging questioning, discussing scripture, and leading reflection on competition vs. community and contract vs. covenant. Many thanks to Dan who worked hard to prepare and give this gift to so many of our youth.

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash
Brazos Association Minister



Hildegard Kuehne Everett was a long-time member of the church--and her father **Dr. J. M. Kuehne** was an early member of the church and on the physics faculty at UT. Her family was part of the early German community here in Austin. Many years ago she taught me how to make Easter eggs the way the early German settlers in **Fredericksburg** did—using bluebonnets and onion skins. Because of the continuing drought this year, there won't be

many bluebonnets, so give onion skins a try. You will need the papery part of onion skins (yellow or red—I have never tried white—don't know if that works!) or 5-6 bluebonnets per egg—plus as many uncooked white-shelled eggs as you would like. You will also need strips of cloth (about 1 1/2 wide and 10-12 inches long) and straight pins. Carefully holding an egg in one hand, arrange the papery onion skin around the shell, holding it as tightly as you can. Take a strip of cloth and wrap it as tightly as possible around the egg, covering the onion skin and the shell. Secure the end of the cloth strip with a straight pin, taking care not to



Seven-year-old Juliet Quisenberry sang the national anthem at a recent race in Lakeway.

It was a joy to see former church violinist Andy Streitlemeier at church on March 16th. He was in town to see us (naturally) and also to meet with his doctoral advisors at UT to put the finishing touches on his degree. Andy is enjoying his work with the orchestra and violin students at Denison University in Granville, OH. When asked how he was managing with the bitter cold this winter, he grinned and pointed to his beard! Andy's wife Danita is also enjoying her work at Ohio State.



Andy Streitlemeier, former violinist for the trio, enjoyed visiting with Colin Ferguson, Jonathan Geer, and Amy Harris, our current trio.

Our hearts go out to our marvelous pianist **Jonathan Geer** whose younger brother was killed in an automobile accident in the Dallas area in mid-March.

Tom VandeStadt and **Robin Chapman** enjoyed a Spring Break trip to **Tucson, Arizona**. They hiked to **Wasson Peak** through stands of saguaro cactus in the desert heat

on one day, negotiated patches of ice and snow while hiking up **Mt. Wrightson** the next day, and enjoyed snow flurries while finishing a hike up **Mt. Guthrie** on their last day. One of the highlights of the trip (ha ha) was stopping at the award winning rest stop outside of **Lost Cruces** on their way home.



Intrepid Tom VandeStadt at an award winning rest stop in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Norma Hawes and **Steve Domingue** had a wonderful time on their spring break trip to **New York City**. They stayed two nights at the Hilton on 57th Street (in return for



enduring a time share pitch) and four nights at the Hotel Edison next to Times Square. They saw five performances in four days: three Broadway plays ("Kinky Boots," "Waiting for Godot," and "A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder") and two performances at **Lincoln Center** (the Paul Taylor Dance Co. and a performance of Mozart's Requiem). They saw the MOMA and about a third of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. On a day when the temperature was 20 degrees (F) and the wind about 20-30 mph they visited the **Statue of Liberty** and **Ellis Island**.

Relatively new member and new deacon **Janet Parsons** enjoyed a great visit with her mother **Elizabeth Burns** in Kansas in late March. Her mom grew up in **Manhattan, Kansas**, where her father was a chemistry professor at **Kansas State**. She met Janet's father while in nursing school, and they settled in **Topeka** soon after getting married. Janet's father passed away ten years ago, but her mom is doing great! She is active in the **First Congregational Church**, always lunching with the ladies and helping organize committees and gatherings. She is also very involved in her neighborhood - a group of them plays cards at her house twice a week, and she has been secretary for the neighborhood association for many years. Janet has two brothers and two sisters who have all moved away, but they take turns visiting their mother regularly. She is quite content to stay in Topeka around her life-long friends, and is very happy. Janet says that she certainly deserves this relaxed time in her life after raising five children, working as a registered nurse, helping run the family flower and nursery business, and finally taking care of her husband as he declined with Parkinson's.



Intrepid Ellie Nash, right, and the Muslim bride whose wedding she attended in India.

Ellie Nash could have been craving corned beef and cabbage and **Irish Car Bombs** on **St. Patrick's Day**, but instead she managed to have the time of her life celebrating **Holi**, (an ancient **Hindu** spring festival also known as the festival of colors and the festival of love—now popular with non-Hindus in that part of the world) and going to a Muslim wedding. In addition to that, several days later she managed to sign up for the **Affordable Care Act** all the way from India (with no difficulty!)—perfect timing as she will turn 26 soon—and she made the deadline!

Cameron Goff's relay team has qualified for the **Texas**

Relays, March 28-29, at Mike Myers Stadium on the UT campus. They will be running the 4x400 meter relay representing **Anderson High School** (this relay has each athlete run once around the 400 meter track, and is traditionally the final race of a track meet). Preliminary races will be Friday evening, and the top nine teams will advance to the finals on Saturday evening (complete schedule and results will be posted on texassports.com). In other track news, Cameron won the **Varsity Boys 400 meter race** at the **Austin ISD** track meet, and also participates in the 4x100 meter relay and the long jump. We will give you an update on the results in the May issue of The Visitor.

We are enjoying getting to know **Rev. Jeff and Stelli Munnis** who moved here from **Gainesville, Florida** last year. Jeff has been asking for prayers for his new grandson, the son of his daughter **Holly and Vince Meunier** (pronounced like junior) who live in **Durango, Colorado**. **Wyatt**, now three months old, is finally doing better. He was born with two holes in his heart, one between the ventricles and one between the atriums, but fortunately the hole between the atriums has closed on its own. In effect, his diagnosis has changed. He will still need surgery (scheduled for May 1), but it should be less extensive.

It was a joy to see **Paul Deisler** (up from Corpus Christi) and his daughter Julie (from Santa Fe) in church on March 23rd. Paul came up from Corpus and Julie joined him here as Paul's son **Conrad** (and Julie's brother, of course) was having a crayfish boil for everyone.



Doyal Pinkard and visiting Paul Deisler had a spirited conversation after church.

Lisa Kirch writes from **Sheffield, Alabama**, that her daughter **Sarah** has been accepted at **CalArts** (California Institute of the Arts, a Walt Disney foundation); **MICA** (Maryland Institute and College of Art), which has offered her a \$50K scholarship; and **SAIC** (School of the Art Institute of Chicago), which is offering her one of their 6 Presidential Scholarships, worth \$153K. Yes, you read that correctly. One-hundred-fifty-three-thousand dollars!

Micah 6 News

She's still waiting to hear from Reed, Bard, and Oberlin, but it looks like SAIC is where she'll be. Lisa gave an invited paper at a conference in Munich last month and had the wonderful experience of being around people who'd actually read and liked her work. Lisa has been promoted to associate-professor of art at the University of Northern Alabama in Florence.

Nancy Edison, avid gardener, led a wonderful forum for the church Green Team on "Xeriscape That Actually Looks Good" after church on the 23rd. It was well-attended by about 30 members of the congregation who were interested in taking care of their yards using less water. She was rightly pleased with her 1st Power Point presentation--as was her audience.



Nancy Edison gave a very interesting seminar on xeriscape gardening after church. Bill Mueller, Norma Hawes, Rachel Deitz, and Chester Rosson are in the audience

Former members and still friends of the church, **Nancy and Dennis McCormick**, who have been in **Missoula, Montana**, since Dennis finished his Ph.D. at UT in German in the late 1960s, report that the idea of 80s for high temperatures is pretty exciting--their highs have recently been in the 40s. It has been a long winter.

The congregation has been so pleased to see **Rambie and Fran Briggs** back in our midst after an absence of several months. Rambie suffered a relapse of his pericarditis that knocked him flat for a bit, but he is now on the upswing, they have been to church two weeks in a row. They are both hoping to be back in the choir soon. Nodie is really hoping for that, too!

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pierce the egg. Place the eggs (onion ones in one pot and bluebonnet ones in another), Cover with cold water, bring to a boil, boil a minute or so, remove from heat. and then let them sit in the boiling hot water for 30 minutes or so.

Micah 6 of Austin had its Annual Meeting on March 22nd at **University Presbyterian Church** after the Saturday food pantry. We had our first "weigh in" for our **2014 Food Basket Challenge**, with the hope of collecting 50,000 lbs and \$15000 for food to stock our pantry this year. To date (and soon after beginning the challenge), we have collected over 2000 lbs. of food I hope our church will join in the challenge and thus join in the work to augment what our pantry can provide. At the meeting, we also formally elected our board as our by-laws require, gave thanks for new programs, discussed challenges, and celebrated the just finished \$7000 plus fundraising through **Amplify Austin's** "I Live Here, I Give Here" drive. Our Annual Report was made available. I will bring a printed copy to the church. There is also one posted on our website, and you can request more printed copies by contacting me.

Micah 6 finished last year with a deficit. Although we "stretched" last year by hiring a Coordinator and continue to have good reserves, we are working to grow our fundraising to be able to sustain and expand our work. We will be hosting a music fundraising event in May. More information about this event to come!

Thanks, also, to our team of Street Youth Drop in Cooks: **Pam Tucker, Barbara Burnham, Ruth Koenig, and Kristin Parkhill**. They are joining me in providing a nourishing dinner at the **Micah 6 Street Youth Drop In** every other month. We fed about 45 people on March 16 and will next provide the meal on **Mother's Day**. And thanks to so many of you who worked so much on Freeze Night this year, a program our church does in cooperation with Micah 6 and Lifeworks, as well as to our wonderful regular Micah 6 pantry volunteers from Congregational Church.

Liz Nash
Congregational Church Board Representative
and Micah 6 Board President

Then run cold water over the eggs and remove the cloth strips. The onion-dyed eggs will be lovely shades of yellow, gold, and brown and the bluebonnet eggs will be a pale greenish/gray/blue with imprints of the flowers in delicate blues and greens and flecks of pink or purple.

— Pat Oakes



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

Return Service Requested

Deadline for May Visitor — April 21st

History Corner

From "A Brief History of the Congregational Church of Austin"
written by Hildegard Kuehne Everett, 1976, on the 75th Anniversary of this Church



Dr. R.J. Briggs, first pastor of the church
who served from 1901-1923

The minister of **Tenth St. Methodist Church, Rev. J. Ritchie Briggs**, ceased believing in a literal hell and had other problems with the **Methodist** hierarchy. Twelve followers signed Articles of Incorporation on **March 21, 1901**, and filed them with the State of Texas on April 2, 1901, to become an independent church named The Methodist Church of Austin. Dr. Briggs then agreed to become the pastor of the group, and preached the first sermon on Easter at the **Odd Fellows Hall on Congress Avenue**. Rev. Dr. Briggs was a brilliant orator and beloved leader of the total community. He ministered to many persons who were rejected by other ministers. He became ill in 1914 and had to have a nursing assistant to aid him. The church lost members from its high of 250, and the leaders of the church decided in 1921 to locate nearer the **University of Texas**.

Addendum from **Lisa Kirch** "Dr. Briggs was my great-granduncle. That is, he was my great-grandmother's brother, her (paternal) grandfather's uncle. He and his wife were from Alabama, and their son ended up being a kind of important person in Texas. His name was **George Waverley Briggs II**, and you'll find him in the online **Texas** encyclopedia. He was at the Austin paper----and then was involved with the **Red Cross**, the Texas Centennial, and the prisons commission (reform) or something. My dad said he (his bank in Dallas) loaned Tom Braniff the money to start his airline. Dr. and Mrs. Briggs are both buried at **Oakwood Cemetery** as is their son. Their house was on 10th Street, right across from the **Governor's Mansion**. I think there's some insurance commission or company there now. **Hildegard** used to drive **Mrs. Briggs** to church; I think **Matt Blackstock** did, too. How wonderful that both of them talked to me about her." There will be more information on Dr. Briggs in another issue--a