

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt



*Southern trees bear strange fruit,
 Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
 Black body swinging in the Southern breeze,
 Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.*

Abel Meerpol wrote his poem, *Strange Fruit*, after watching white people in Marion, Indiana, lynch two black men, Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith. Meerpol's poem soon became the lyrics to a song that Billy Holiday made famous with her powerful renditions.

Between 1882 and 1968, white Americans lynched at least 3,446 black Americans in nearly every state of the union. White Americans in Mississippi, Texas and Georgia lynched the highest number of black Americans. So intense was the terror of lynching for black Americans in the South, some said it was worse than slavery.

Theologian James Cone writes convincingly that American lynching and Roman crucifixion served

the same purpose. Roman crucifixion was a public spectacle of violence used to dominate the Jewish people. The intent was not simply to kill the condemned but to send the message to the Jewish population at large: We are your master, we will tolerate no resistance from you, and we will not hesitate to torture and kill you. In the United States, white Americans lynched black Americans with the same intent.

On Good Friday, we looked at Christ's crucifixion through a theological lens that sees the crucifixion as an act of solidarity with all people on earth who suffer the most horrible forms of oppression, torture and death, those whom Ignacio Ellacuria calls the "crucified people of history." Seen through this lens, Christ himself was the strange fruit hanging from the tree.

On Easter, we proclaimed our faith that God does not give those who dominate, those who crucify and lynch, the last word. Despite all the evidence, despite how things look, despite the way human history appears, we have faith that those who dominate, those who crucify and lynch, will not inherit the earth. They will not determine the outcome of human history.

Those who used the cross to dominate the Jewish people did not have the last word. They killed Christ. Sealed him in a tomb behind a big stone. And said to themselves, that's it. He's gone. Silent for good. No longer will he disrupt our imperial order. We have prevailed.

But Christ did not stay gone or remain silent. Those who followed his way continued to proclaim his message that the meek will inherit the earth, not those who dominate. They continued to insist that God will prevail over those who use death as a tool to dominate. God will prevail not through force,

(continued on p. 2.)

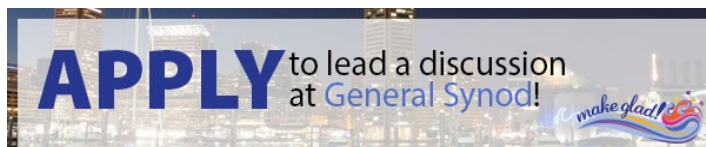
not by killing people, but through the liberating, healing and reconciling love that is Christ's way.

Christ is risen. Indeed! Let us bear his fruit in our lives. Let us refuse to give those who dominate the last word.

Long-ago members Dennis and Nancy McCormick (think late 1960s-early 1970s) have spent many years in Missoula, Montana., where Dennis was on the German faculty at the University of Montana. They wrote to say how much they enjoyed the picture of the bluebonnet and onion skin Easter eggs that went out with the query for news. They vaguely remember Hildegard and Rizer Everett. It was Hildegard who taught Pat Oakes how to make the eggs like the German immigrant settlers did in Fredericksburg. Nancy noted in mid-March that they have a picture of Paula, their first child, as a little girl, sitting among the wildflowers in the spring outside of Austin. It is just a guess, but that area—wherever it was—is now completely built over. In contrast to our warm winter, they had four inches of snow recently—but were expecting 50s within a few days.



Easter eggs dyed with natural dyes in the style of early German settlers in Fredericksburg—onion skin eggs on the left and bluebonnet eggs on the right.



Is there a church or faith-related topic you're especially passionate about? Tell us about it, and you could be selected to lead a "Be the Church" roundtable discussion at General Synod 2017.

Free to lead! Just register for General Synod. Deadline to apply: **April 30, 2017**

[For more info and to submit proposal >>](#)



4/2/17 Alison and Pam cutting the cake at the coffee hour reception/celebration the Sunday after their Friday evening wedding.

Church Leadership

Trustee Chair	Don Brown
Deacons Chair	Betty Bodman
Outreach Team	Whit Bodman
Moderator	John Goff
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Pam Tucker
Christian Education	Rachel Dietz, Lynne Lemley
Youth Sunday School	
Coordinator	John Burlinson
Clerk	Jaime Hadley
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Webmistress	Shannon Quisenberry, Sara Ross
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

Personals

by Pat Oakes

Friday evening, May 31st, a joyous occasion took place at the church. It was the wedding of Pam Tucker to Alison Goodgame, her partner of ten years who is now officially a Tucker! The attendants at the wedding were Savanna and Harrison Tucker who also lit the candles. Rev. Jo Jensen was the officiant and did a wonderful job. The most touching part of the service was when Alison spoke her vows of commitment to both Harrison and Savanna after both she and Pam had exchanged vows. It must be said that a few happy tears were shed, but there were a number of spontaneous laughs and cheers. On Sunday, April 2nd, to continue the celebration, the Deacons led by Jen Howicz, hosted a reception after the service for everyone to enjoy.

SAIC for a 2-week program this summer.



Megan Goff in front of the SAIC in Chicago, March 2017.



3/31/17 Harrison and Savanna Tucker were the attendants at Alison Goodgame and Pam Tucker's wedding. Jo Jensen was the officiant.



Megan really loved this sign at SAIC.

The Christeson-Goff family is in the process of searching for just the right spot for their daughter and budding artist Megan. Gail, John, and Megan took a quick trip to Chicago to visit the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). SAIC is one of the largest art schools in the US (2850 undergraduate students) and is affiliated with the Art Institute of Chicago museum. They were all impressed with the facilities, which ran the gamut from metal furnaces to digital studios. The rest of the weekend was spent taking in a comedy show, visiting a couple of museums and the local sights, and catching up with an old friend of John's from Boston. Megan, currently a junior at Anderson High School, will be back at

When Ruth Koenig and her husband returned from China in 1991, she thought she was done teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). But she soon found herself volunteering at the Illinois community college she had retired from and continued that till she moved to Austin in 2012. When she moved, she thought she was finished again, but she spent two more years teaching ESL at Life Works till two shoulder surgeries sidelined her. But it's been a continuing saga, and one she welcomes. She currently spends a couple of hours a week each with a Chinese young woman, a Ukrainian upstairs neighbor, and, thanks to a recommendation from Betty Bodman,

Heart of Texas Association News

April

by Liz Nash

All are invited to our Heart of Texas Association Spring Meeting, to be hosted by Faith United Church of Christ on Sunday, April 23rd, 3:30 pm through dinner, with registration beginning at 3 pm. We will welcome Jeremy Albers, the new Designated Director of Outdoor Ministries of Slumber Falls Camp, as he shares his vision with us, as well as Scott Martin, pastor of Faith UCC, as he shares how we can all be involved with KIVA to invest in giving people around the world loans to create better opportunities for their lives. Join us for good fellowship among our churches, for worship together, to conduct the business of our Association, and to hear from Jeremy and Scott. Faith would appreciate RSVPs to Janet Sherman, jemonroe52@gmail.com or 210-393-9633, by April 10th if possible, so they can get a good count for the meal.

The women of the Heart of Texas Association churches are all invited to the Houston Association/South Central Conference Women's Retreat, hosted by the women of Immanuel UCC in Spring, at Slumber Falls Camp on April 28-30. The theme is "From Mud to Masterpiece," where "the work of the potter will be the metaphor for the shaping hands of God; the mud or the clay will be the metaphor for each of us." Kathy Blossom, the potter whose presentation many of us remember from last year's conference annual meeting, will be the guest speaker.

The cost is \$100. To register, go to http://www.slumberfalls.org/events/women_retreat/women_retreat_info.htm.

Registration is now open for our South Central Conference Annual Meeting, to be held at Cathedral of Hope in Dallas on Friday, June 9th starting at 1 pm through Saturday, June 10th ending at 4 pm. The theme is "Lift Your Eyes," based on Isaiah 60:1, and the keynote speaker is Rev. Carol Howard Merritt, Presbyterian minister and sought after speaker who often addresses ministering to a new generation of

Christians. We will be voting on calling Rev. Dr. Don Longbottom as our settled (more permanent) Conference Minister and on our Constitution and Bylaws. For those seeking and needing boundary training, it will be offered on Friday (renewal) and Sunday (first time). For information and to register, go to <https://sccucc.org/annual-meeting/>.

We hope many of our women will plan to go to the UCC Southern Regional Women's Retreat, to be held October 20-22 at Mo Ranch in Hunt, Texas. The theme will be "Joyful Expectation, Peaceful Inspiration!" based on Isaiah 55:12. This retreat, which moves to different conferences in the Southern Region of the UCC each year, is being hosted by the South Central Conference this year. A group of outstanding women are hard at work on planning a wonderful experience for all of us. Information about price, program, and registration will be coming.

And, congratulations to Trent Williams on his installation celebration on Sunday, March 26, as Associate Minister of Friends Congregational UCC in College Station. Our hopes and prayers go with Trent and Friends for a fruitful and faithful ministry together.

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash, Association Minister

Personals (continued)

three refugees from Iraq and Turkey, all sisters. As of now, she estimates that she has worked with students from close to 50 countries and says, "In addition to being with family here, I can't think of a more enjoyable or satisfying way to spend my retirement." We all thank you, Ruth, for your dedication to teaching English to these eager learners—they are lucky indeed!

On Friday, March 10, the state of Texas granted Lucy Elaine Hanouille a legal name change. She now wishes to be known as Lucy Anne Erda. She also wants to thank everyone in the congregation for the love and support over the past years and looks forward to the next step in her journey on Earth.

On Saturday, March 11, it was cold and rainy—but our Sunday school teacher Amy Rivera and her fiancé Robert Kent were married at Mueller Park in an outdoor ceremony rainy weather or no. Amy was celebrated at coffee hour after church on April 9th.

Whittaker in San Antonio on Sunday, March 26th. Randy is also Pat and Mel Oakes's god-son, so they were especially sad to miss the wedding as they were out of town. Randy's Aunt Lila baked 1100 fabulous, traditional almond and walnut cookies for the reception, a delicious labor of love!! The happy couple honeymooned in Belgium and were delighted with wonderful beer and fabulous chocolates.



3/26/17 Sarah, Randy, Ryan, Carie, Larbi Sennour at Randy and Carie's wedding



4/9/17 Amy Rivera Kent cutting her cake at coffee hour

Nodie and Dennis Murphy's grandson, Randy Sennour, son of the Murphys' daughter Sarah and her husband Larbi Sennour, was married to Carie

Ellie Nash reports on further adventures in India in an e-mail dated March 19. "After spending two fantastic weeks traveling with Louis' parents to Darjeeling, Amritsar, Agra, and Delhi, Louis and I moved to Northern Uttar Pradesh (UP), about an hour from the Nepali border, about two weeks ago. What a great change it is from Delhi—breathing clean air, eating locally grown crops (and chicken/mutton/occasional buffalo in my case), hearing so much less noise and traffic, living and working on a rural school campus, and getting to build and strengthen relationships with people who are doing great things for their country in terms of development.

Bahraich is where I came to live and work for a month total when I was here in India three years ago. For me, being back here feels so comfortable, but for Louis it's all new! Louis and the people I love here — like the Sherwani family I lived with, the school teachers at the Global School of Learning, the Chaturvedi family that runs an incredible organization called DEHAT—have heard so much about each other. But now all these people are getting to know Louis. I'm happy to say that they all approve of him and, in fact, absolutely adore him (surprise, surprise!). We are so lucky to be able to be in a community filled with such generous people who think nothing of going out of their way to include us and to make sure we have everything we need." Ellie's wonderful, informative letter is quite long and filled with pictures. If you would like to read it in its entirety, send an e-mail to oakes@utexas.edu and it will be sent to you. They have also launched an exciting fund raiser to buy books for the students at the school where they are living.



3/25/17 Arinze Carter-Enyi

The congregation was delighted to have Jonathan Geer's mom Trish Geer, visiting from Waco, join the trio on March 12 playing the oboe along with Jonathan on piano, Tony Rogers on cello, and Amy Harris on violin. It is quite clear where Jonathan got at least some of his amazing musical talent!



3/12/17 Jonathan Geer with his mom Trish Geer who played the oboe for the service with the trio



Spring 2017 Ellie and Louis covered in Holi colors to celebrate Spring and the triumph of good over evil with the Chaturvedi family, who live about half an hour away from them on the other side of Bahraich City

Our former church pianist (between now-almost-101-year-old Florence Castle and Jonathan Geer), Aaron Carter-Enyi (you may remember that he used Carter-Cohn until his marriage) and his wife Quintina Carter-Enyi are the proud parents of a son, Arinze, who was born in Atlanta on 3/19/17 at 11:18PM, weighing 7 lbs 9 oz. His name means "Grace." Aaron is the new Director of Music and Worship Arts at North Springs UMC in Sandy Springs, GA—a suburb of Atlanta. Their new home address is: Aaron and Quintina Carter-Enyi; 699 Formwalt St SW; Atlanta, GA 30315. If you would like to send something to Arinze, their gift registry is at www.target.com. The registry ID and link is 014399124475028.

Costa Rica was the “Spring Break” destination for Marilyn Gaddis, George Carruthers, and the Carruthers family. Grandchildren Allison, fluent in Spanish, served as interpreter; and Jonathan, took care of the grandparents. Daughter-in-law Sandra, was tour director and son Rob, the skillful driver. They flew to Liberia, picked up a “Chinese brand” van and groceries, and headed for La Fortuna. Their three day stay was in a house with a great view of the Arenal volcano and a lovely porch for watching colorful birds visit a feeder. The first full day out was spent in the rainforest viewing the Rio Fortuna waterfall and walking the Orchid Trail where hundreds of orchid plants are banded to the tree trunks. The next day was a drive to the Arenal National Park for volcano and

noon, they all boarded a sailboat (no wind) for snorkeling and watching the sunset while enjoying a fish dinner. After a wonderful carefree week in a beautiful country where one can speak English, use dollars and credit cards, the flight home from San Jose was uneventful!

Former member Ranae Beeker is doing well, keeping busy with family, work and her home in the Seattle area. She saw her daughter and family in Seattle for a short visit and then will fly out to see her daughter and her family the end of the month, too. Her grandson Eilif will be 2 in July, and is growing like a weed! So much fun!

Mel and Pat Oakes enjoyed a five-day visit from Mel's nephew Stuart Oakes and his spouse Jay Ruffner who came from Cleveland, Ohio, in early March. After coming to church to meet folk that Sunday, they took off for Fredericksburg via Johnson City to see LBJ's boyhood home. While in Fredericksburg, Stuart, Jay, and Mel climbed Enchanted Rock—Mel climbed part of the way but gusty winds kept him from going more than half way up. Stuart and Jay persevered and made it to the summit. Pat found herself to be quite content watching all the eager climbers and visiting with others who did not feel like climbing. The four also enjoyed learning a lot of history at the Nimitz Museum of the War in the Pacific and eating wonderful food in local restaurants.

They returned to Austin on that Tuesday and were met by Stuart's sister Jennifer who drove down from Dallas. The five of them finished up a great trip by dining in style at the Salt Lick—yum!



Spring break, 2017 George Carruthers and Marilyn Gaddis enjoying a sunset sail in Costa Rica

wildlife viewing. From the Arenal Observatory Lodge porch, they were entertained by the coatimundi or pizota grabbing for fruit as it fell off the bird feeder. The volcano, now quiet after last erupting in 1968, stayed beneath the clouds. They then drove to Quepos, over a variety of roads for a three-day stay in a bed & breakfast. On the way they saw numerous African palm nurseries and mature groves. Palm oil is now Costa Rica's major export since the 1960's banana blight. The next day was a hike into Manuel Antonio National Park where they did see a three-toed sloth, butterflies, and birds. The park was Costa Rica's first major ecotourist destination and is in need of updating. In the afternoon, some of the family went surfing in the “warmish” ocean. To celebrate their last day in Costa Rica, the grandchildren, Jonathan and Allison, went zip-lining in the morning! In the after-

History Corner
by Pat and Mel Oakes



One of the original stained glass windows from the first church building built in 1906.

Easter Sunday, fell on April 7 in 1901—an important date in our church history. You'll see why when you read below. You can read a great deal more about the history of our church at: <http://server16.websitehostserver.net/~patandme/CAHistory/index.html>

Here is a brief excerpt from a history written by **Hildegard Kuehne Everett** on the occasion of the church's 75th anniversary in 1976.

"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.

The availability of funds and freedom for the local group led to association with the Congregational Conference of Texas and a change of name (in 1904) to First Congregational Church. **A.O. Watson**, an architect and member of the church, designed the building which was completed in 1906 at Ninth and Colorado St. Stained glass windows in the present building are a heritage from that building . . ."

May Visitor Deadline—April 28, 2017