

THE VISITOR

May 2013

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt

Rev. John Towery, Pastor Emeritus

The United Church of Christ should be as closely associated with a bold response to climate change as it is to a radically inclusive welcome, and to justice and equality for the LGBT community. In other words, *Loving and Healing the Earth* should come to mind as quickly as *God is Still Speaking* and *Open and Affirming* when people think of the **United Church of Christ**. This was the message conveyed by national UCC staff, and local UCC laity and clergy, at the UCC LINK event on climate change I attended in **Cleveland** from April 16-19.



About 50 lay people and clergy from across the UCC attended the **LINK** event. **Michael Martin** (First Community Church, Dallas) and I represented the **South Central Conference**. We heard presentations from UCC global partners in **Palestine** and **China** about environmental abuse in their parts of the world, and we toured parts of Cleveland to see environmental degradation in our own part of the world (the famous burning river, now flowing with belly-up dead fish). **Massachusetts Conference Minister, Rev. Dr. Jim Antal**, preached on the necessity of responding to climate change now, or else all sermons in 20 years will be grief-filled laments for all we've lost on planet Earth. National UCC staff, **Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Black** and **Rev. Dr. Ben Guess**, shared their visions for a bold UCC response to climate change.

Most heartening for me was learning about all of the activity occurring right now throughout the UCC regarding climate change, and witnessing the strong passions expressed by those insisting far more must be done. **Rev. Dr. Jim Antal** described how all of the New England Conference Ministers covenanted with one another to

make climate change a top priority in their ministry. UCC churches throughout the country are participating in the UCC **Mission 4/1 Earth** ministry, writing to legislators, erecting solar panels, taking steps to reduce their carbon footprints, protesting the Keystone XL pipeline, organizing retreats on climate change, developing eco-theologies and liturgies, and actively promoting the General Synod resolutions that address climate change. Yet even with all of this activity, the message expressed repeatedly by participants to national staff was that the UCC needs to develop an even bolder and more organized response to climate change.

My efforts through the **Congregational Church of Austin, UCC**, have been to address climate change through an inter-faith group in Austin. But I'm hoping the churches of the South Central Conference, including CCA-UCC, can join forces with UCC churches from across the country to become part of a growing UCC movement to address climate change. One way to start is by studying the three resolutions to be voted on at General Synod this summer: divestment from fossil fuel companies, opposing mountaintop removal coal mining in Appalachia, and making UCC churches more carbon neutral (you can find the resolutions at <http://www.ucc.org/synod/resolutions>). Another way to begin is to find out how our church can become more carbon neutral, and then taking the measures to reduce our carbon footprint.

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I'd like to thank our **Conference Minister, Rev. Dr. Douglas Anders**, for nominating me to participate in the LINK event, and the national staff in Cleveland for bringing so many passionate, committed, and hard-working UCC folks together for the event. If you'd like to be part of our church's green team to study and respond to climate change, please contact me at revtomv@swbell.net.

TOM

CEU Seminaries Book Sale by Beth Gleason

The Conference CUE Seminaries Committee is sponsoring a Book Sale at the Annual Conference in May to raise funds (as an extra gift) for CUE Seminaries. Both hard books and paper backs on all topics are needed.

If you wish to donate books, bring them with you to the church fellowship hall, any Sunday until the Annual meeting in late May. Look for the donation box and CUE seminaries sign. Spring clean your book shelves! Donate a few books and support CUE Seminaries!

AGE Equipment Drive Update

In honor of our brother and long-time member, **Mathis Blackstock, The Board of Christian Outreach (BCO)** sponsored an equipment drive for **AGE of Central Texas**. Thanks to the very generous contributions of \$769, the BCO was able to purchase four very sturdy wheelchairs. We received numerous thanks from AGE's **Health Equipment Lending Coordinator, Josh Ribakove**, who says they will be available for free, no-time-limit loans to their clients. **Executive Director Joyce Lauck** was especially touched by the gift, noting that Dr Blackstock had been honored by the organization as a recipient of the **Bert Kruger Smith Vision Award**.

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

CCA Spring Retreat at Slumber Falls

The annual **CCA Spring Retreat at Slumber Falls Camp in New Braunfels** takes place the weekend of **May 3-5**. Our tentative topic for the retreat is **"Web-of-Life Sacramentalism."** We'll be reflecting on the meaning of sacrament, and in particular, the two Protestant Christian sacraments of baptism and holy communion, and then broadening our view of sacrament to include the sacramental nature of creation and the web-of-life in which we live. Please contact Marilyn Vaché or Tom VandeStadt if you'd like to help plan the event this year.

Tapestry, The Austin Women's Choir Upcoming Performances

Lucy Hanouille announces the following for **Tapestry, The Austin Woman's Choir**

Saturday, May 4th at St Matthew's Episcopal Church

Tapestry, The Austin Women's Choir, will present their Spring Concert **"Branching Out: One World, Many Voices"**

Please join them as they celebrate the second half of their 25th anniversary season by exploring the experiences of women around the world.

Tickets available online and at the door

General Admission \$15
Students/Seniors (60+) \$10
Under 6 FREE

Monday, May 20th, 7:30pm at St. Martin's Evangelical Lutheran Church on 15th street.

Tapestry, The Austin Women's Choir, will participate in the Austin Women's Choir Festival

They will be performing a few pieces from their upcoming concert along with SoCo Women's Chorus, Hilde Girls, The Women of Heartsong with two other young women's choirs to be announced.

Admission to this concert is FREE!

Personals by Pat Oakes

Spring is about irises for **Jaime Hadley**. Jaime was asked by the **Iris Society of Austin** to chair their **2013 Annual Iris Show at Zilker Garden Center** on Saturday, March 30. It was a busy weekend for Jaime as he spent Good Friday afternoon setting up the room for the show, then rushed home after Good Friday evening church service to cut the best stalks from his garden. The show turned out better than expected given the earlier than normal show date, and the hail storms that damaged gardens in the area just ten days before the show. None of Jaime's own entries were promoted to the head table as show winners, but everyone was pleased with the eighty-nine horticulture specimens and seventeen floral designs that were entered in the show to make it a great success.



Beth Gleason and Sara Ross were groupies for Jaime Hadley and his beautiful irises at the 2013 Annual Iris Show on March 30 at the Zilker Garden Center.

The next Saturday, several members of the Austin society took later blooming stalks to the Belton Iris Society's annual show, and there Jaime had better luck. For the first time ever he was awarded the **Best Specimen of Show** award for one of his Space-Age Tall Bearded Iris named "Ty Blue." He also took home the Belton award for best Violet iris for his bloom named "Christmas Present." "Ty Blue" was hybridized near Dallas by a grower named **Tom Burseen**, and at the time of this writing, Jaime is looking forward to touring Tom's gardens as part of the **American Iris Society's National Convention** to be held in Dallas from April 15 to 20. The term "space-age", when referring to iris, indicates a trait bred into new hybrids that results in some projection coming from the end of the 'beard' and lifting off the 'falls' or lower petals. If you are interested in joining the **Austin Iris Society** for a great monthly potluck and program, Jaime can tell you all about

it, as he will be taking on the role of **VP of Membership** as of June 1.

Keep **Joe McMillan** in your prayers. Sometimes when it rains, it pours. Just a little over a month ago he had a heart attack and a stent installed to clear up the blockage and he had been doing fine. Then he went in for a routine colonoscopy and was found to have anal cancer. He is being treated with chemo and radiation for the next 5-6 weeks. He will not have to have surgery and has been told that there is a 90% cure rate.

Tommie Pinkard spent almost a week at Seton Hospital in April after an extended bout with asthma which was not getting better at home. Every medical student in the ER took turns listening to her wheeze so they will all know what asthma sounds like. Tommie always likes to help out when she can! Doyal missed her at home but was able to see her at the hospital. Their dog Corky was beside himself with joy when she finally came home and parked himself on her lap and would not budge.

Cathy Hubbs had a run-in with pneumonia in mid-April. She was treated for several weeks at Westminster Manor where she now lives and at this writing was making good progress toward getting well again.

Fran and Rambie Briggs are mourning the loss of Rambie's younger brother, **Alton King Briggs**, who died on April 11 of salivary gland cancer. He was 69 years of age and a retired consulting archeologist. His friends and family gathered in **Aransas Pass** for his memorial service on April 16. As is often the case, the time together was meaningful as they celebrated Alton's life. Unfortunately, Rambie has been experiencing a relapse of the pericarditis that he was struggling with in January and February. Medications have been adjusted, and he is feeling better. He hopes to be back in action soon.

Florence Castle's 97th birthday is **May 13**. If you would like to send her a card, she would be delighted to hear from you. Her address is 2901 Del Curto Road, Austin, TX 78704-4821. Florence has lived in her home since **1940** when she and her late husband Joe moved here from Illinois! She is in church almost every week—always with smile on her face.

Ricky and Monica Masters welcomed the newest member of the Masters family on Wednesday morning, April 3, 2013 weighing in at 7 pounds and 14 ounces. Red-headed (so far) **Clara Zane Masters** was greeted with great joy by her parents and later by her big sister Agnes. Delighted

grandparents **Mary (Towery) and Danny Masters** report that everyone is doing well. Clara is pastor emeritus **John and Elenaor Towery's** fourth great-grandchild.



Ricky and Monica Masters with Agnes and brand-new Clara on April 3, 2013

Nancy Brown was so pleased to be able to attend the gala 100th birthday celebration and dinner dance of her sorority, **Delta Sigma Theta**, at the Hilton Hotel on Saturday evening, April 13, along with 800 other happy celebrants. She reports that at age 93 she was not on the planning committee nor did she get up to dance, but she thought it was a wonderful event. Delta Sigma Theta was founded at **Howard University** in 1913 and has both the national chapter and many local chapters. Nancy joined in 1946 and has been active ever since—67 years!

Beth Placek had a great trip to **Washington, D.C.** in mid-April. She goes several time a year to enjoy the fine contra-dancing at the Spanish Ballroom (a restored 1933 Mediterranean style art deco building) at **Glen Echo Park**, along with hundreds of other folks on Friday and Sunday--and then spends Saturday at the **National Gallery of Art**. She has been often enough that she now knows a number of the guards whom she finds to be quite knowledgeable about the art they are guarding. She was particularly glad to be there to see the **Dürer** exhibit and to visit her favor-

ite painting, "Moonscape with Bridge" by **Van der Meer**. She has discovered young adult fiction and had a good time visiting with young folks on the Metro or at the museum or at the dances and asking them about whether they had read some of the ones she has enjoyed—and they had.

Once again our hearts go out to **Norma Hawes and Steve Domingue**. Steve's sister **Mona** died suddenly on March 3 --and then his mother **Monique**, 84, died on March 30. She had been an invalid for twelve years and ill prior to that. Steve's dad did a wonderful job of being the caregiver for all of those years and is doing the best he can now. It is so hard to deal with two big losses in such a short time.

Kathleen Strong reports that in mid-April she bought a broom with a rubber head that can be washed. She is also delighted to report that it works on all surfaces!! Happy sweeping, Kathleen!

Everyone enjoyed catching up with **Jaana Rehbein** and her daughter **Ella**, 3, over the month around Easter. Ella had a great time with our caregiver in the nursery. Jaana and Ella were visiting from Germany and joined us almost every Sunday they were here—missing the last one as Jaana had a very bad cold. She was sorry to miss having the opportunity to say goodbye to all of her friends at the church. WE look forward to seeing you again, soon!

Our former church pianist, **Aaron Carter-Cohn**, is enjoying his Fullbright fellowship in music in **Lagos, Nigeria**. Aaron got a nice mention at the beginning of the Lagos section of the **World Voice Day** concert which was live-streamed over the Internet on Tuesday, April 16, when he was thanked by the **U.S. Consul General** as one of the three main organizers of the local participation in the world-wide event. Aaron had accompanied singers in Cincinnati, Ohio, last year for this annual celebration of vocal music. **Nodie Murphy**, who tuned in for the broadcast, saw him in his new beard adjusting microphones and generally supporting the presentations. Nodie found that it was amazing to think she was watching him half way around the world as he made a difference there.

Whit Bodman tells us that Betty's mother, **Florence Jordan**, is settling into Westminster Manor. It is still sometimes confusing for her, remembering where she is and where they are. She does have some trouble remembering people. She looked at a picture of their daughter, **Elizabeth**, and her new husband, **Greg**. She said, "I recognize Greg, but who is that girl that he's with?" Luckily, Elizabeth took it all in stride. Whit has been working with **Texas Impact** on various legislative issues down at the "pink building," where 180 legislators are passing laws, or not. Whit testified at a committee hearing on (against) a law intended to disallow Islamic law – sharia – from being referenced in any Texas court. This would mean that a

Texas court could invalidate the terms of any marriage, divorce, custody case or will conducted according to the Islamic tradition. This could also apply to Jewish and Catholic marriages. Whit has lobbied on behalf of other issues as well. He is learning a great deal about the legislative process.

Paul Deisler writes from Corpus Christi—"there are great pleasures to being a grandfather besides being called 'grandpa' by a bunch of grandchildren. On Saturday, March 23, one of the best of pleasures occurred when my granddaughter **Ava** became **Mrs. Ava Deisler French**. I know and like the groom, **Donny**, so witnessing the marriage of my first-born grandchild was very special. I wish **Ellen** could have been present in person, not only in my heart. Ava, in her talk during the ceremony, thoughtfully mentioned those absent on both the French and Deisler sides of her new family. Her mention of her Grandma Ellen was very poignant to me. The setting for the wedding at the **Casa Rio De Colores** near **Liberty Hill** was beautiful and the weather was perfect. The beautiful and handsome bridesmaids and groomsmen included Ava's sister **Olivia Deisler** and cousin **Ellie Seno** on one hand and her brother **Eric** on the other, which made for a splendid display of youth. For the moment, all was for the best in this best of all possible worlds. A stop on our way back to Corpus on Sunday (daughter Jane driving) to visit our family graves at **Ft. Sam Houston** completed a grand weekend. Whatever else happens, 2013 will go down in my memory as a great year." A more recent report is that Paul had been having trouble with his hip and finally saw the doctor again. They did a CAT scan and found that he had a blood clot and an abdominal aneurysm. He has had surgery and was doing well at last report.

Former church cellist **Michael Erwin** writes from **Michigan**, "There have been big changes in my world. I have moved out of **Coral Gables** and moved back up to the **Interlochen** area to be closer to family up here. My wife is from this area and she needed to be closer to family who, unfortunately, are having some serious health issues. This whole move thing happened literally right after the Christmas holiday break. We were able to sell the house in Coral Gables very quickly, and bought a beautiful place south of Interlochen, between **Karlin** and **Buckley**. It is a nice three bedroom/two bath house on 2.5 acres. It even came with a 100 year-old dairy barn that I can't wait to explore when the weather gets a little warmer. I am already playing in the **Great Lakes Chamber Orchestra** as well as currently subbing in the **Traverse Symphony Orchestra**. I have also joined the Northwestern Michigan College Jazz Big Band, where I am playing bass. I am also currently a firefighter/EMS member with the **Interlochen Fire Department** as well as the **Buckley Fire Department**. The steady job search is slow, but we are persistent and pray-

ing about it every day. The weather has been cold and we certainly have had our fair share of snow. I am attending **Grant United Methodist Church**, which is literally a mile down the road. It is in the middle of a corn field, but, as with the Congregational Church in Austin, very welcoming and happy for us to be there. I am playing cello in church this coming Sunday. My best to all in Austin. I will certainly visit the church again when I am in town, hopefully to bring my wife with me also."

Pat Oakes was set to have her right knee replaced on **April 30**. Having spent four months fairly well crippled, using a cane, etc., she was grateful that she had something that could be fixed in a straightforward manner. She was not enthusiastic about having to have the surgery having had one knee done ten and a half years ago. She knows firsthand (knee?) how arduous it is—but also how worthwhile it is. **Mel** has been her amazing assistant doing all of the household chores and such, and also serving as her coach, taking her swimming at Stacy Pool three to four days a week in order to keep her strength up for the surgery. Because she will be in recuperation mode, Mel and Pat will celebrate their **50th wedding anniversary** on May 18th in a very low-key manner. They are planning a wonderful celebration week with their three daughters and spouses and grandchildren in **August** on **Whidbey Island** near **Seattle**.



A photo of the new apartment building where Wooldridge Elementary School used to be at 24th and Nueces. Just one of the many new buildings in the west campus area near the church.

Another 8 Year Old by Beth Gleason

Think about the best party you have ever been to in your life. Take a minute to remember. This could be your college graduation party or your wedding. Every single person in the room was warm and friendly and happy. Well, that's what **Marathon Monday** is like in **Boston**. I know this because I grew up in Boston and although the rest of the world may focus on the Boston Marathon, we in "Mass" roll it into one huge holiday and it's called Patriot's Day. And Patriot's Day, which includes Marathon Monday, is the fiercest party any state in America has ever thrown for itself. *Ever*.

Everything in the state shuts down to celebrate **Patriot's Day**. It's the end of six months of ice and snow and shoveling them both. Mud season is over and **Fenway Park** is open. The forsythia is just starting to burst forth in yellow. It's been a long winter and we have cabin fever. We are ready to burst forth too.

But it's not just a spring coming out party, we also celebrate the birthplace of the American Revolution. A celebrity in colonial garb will ride a horse, just like Paul Revere did, from Boston to Lexington where the first skirmish between colonial farmers and the British militia began. Revolutionary war cannons will be fired across town greens by modern "Minute Men" celebrating our collective independence from the Brits. Every town in Massachusetts has its own parade to honor the colonial heroes they lost in the **Revolutionary War**, and after that there's the Boston Marathon. It's like two parties in one day and they belong together.

Heading into Boston after your home town parade, every bar will be open, serving breakfast and beer. The city's college fraternities roll out their B-B-Q grills and give food away to passersby. Everyone has a favorite spot along the route and we greet each other like long lost friends, so when your person runs by, they have the biggest cheering squad in the world. Runners pass pushing their handicapped children in strollers and there's always "Johnnie," a long, lean Irish guy in his 80's, the oldest guy in the race. You cheer for the first woman runner and the race crusher in the BC sweatshirt who has had a few too many. We are all out there... the Harvard preppies, the Irish from Southie, the Italians from Arlington. We own this best day of all days, Patriot's Day, and we love to share it with the rest of the world.

But not this past Monday. Just when the large purple-y bruises on our psyche, leftover from the **Sandy Hook Elementary School** debacle have started to heal, there is this bigger blast to absorb. There is an eight year old dead, an

eight year old. He was probably holding his dad's hand, waiting for his friend to cross the finish line, just like I did with my dad so long ago. I can't believe it. I can't believe it. I can't believe it.

Whoever did this, God help them, did not just do this to the Boston Marathoners who are dead or injured, which is horrible enough. This is a blow to a cherished spring ritual for a people who absolutely need to celebrate the freedom of spring, and the history of that freedom which began with their colonial forbears. And it's not just Boston that has to pick up the pieces. All the major roads leading out of this "Hub" city are spokes on a wheel sending out vibes of rage and fear to our Yankee neighbors. For indeed, this is a dire blow to **New England** culture. Patriot's Day with its Marathon Monday will never be the same. This is the party that everyone went to, and where everyone felt safe, because until April 15th, 2013, they were. How do you heal that?



Jaime Hadley shows off one of his award-winning irises.

Brazos Association News

May

by Liz Nash

Our Spring Brazos Association meeting enjoyed the warm, welcoming spirit of **St. John's UCC** in Burton on Sunday, **April 7**. **Glen Schoeneberg** led worship in which he invited us to share Easter stories of resurrection and new life from places we thought new life would not come. In our meeting we elected **Marianne Muhr** of **Weimar** as our new moderator; **Judy Sherman**, **Associate Minister** of **St. John's Burton** as our vice-moderator; and **Jewell Ellis-Eyler** of **United Christian Austin** to our Church and Ministry Committee. We heard a number of good and informative reports that included, among others, those from guests **Charles Stark** of **Slumber Falls Camp** and **Conference Minister Douglas Anders**. Perhaps the best news of all was that **Hope United**, our new church start, had 83 people attend worship on Easter Sunday, a new attendance high for them. We also expressed gratitude and thanks to **Jerry Carpenter**, pastor of **Weimar UCC**, for his service as Association moderator, and to **Ronney Knesek** of **Lyons Evangelical UCC** for his terms of service on Church and Ministry. Our prayers and hopes for a joyous future go with John Sumner, who we recognized for his ten years of ministry at St. Peter's as he and Irene prepare to retire on April 28 and move to be near grandchildren in Florida.

At our meeting, too, we heard about plans for the future and opportunities for ministry. As I have written before, we will return to **Back Bay Mission** on an Association Mission trip **Dec. 1-7, 2013**. (I will be sending out signup information soon.) We will host three students and a professor from **United Seminary** next spring and will be inviting churches to be hosts. We also host the South Central Conference Annual Meeting next year, to be held at **Camp Allen** near **Navasota June 6-8, 2014**. We will be convening a planning committee later on this summer. In addition, we heard about excellent opportunities for ministry. **Ken White** shared about the Alternative Loan Program being developed at United Christian to give people an affordable and fair alternative to abusive payday lenders, explaining their model that can be used by others. **Wes Davenport** shared about St. John's support of efforts to fight human trafficking by supporting the work of the In-

ternational Justice Mission. **Mary Wilson** shared about the backpack program at **Church of the Savior** in **Cedar Park** that provides food in backpacks each week to children at a nearby school who are in need. I shared about the Disaster Ministry program in the UCC, inviting our churches to consider storing "clean up buckets" with supplies suggested by Church World Service, as well as to work out a way to host other UCC church members who must find shelter temporarily. **Shirley Anderson** of **St. John's UCC** talked about their experience becoming a Red Cross shelter and gave guidance about how to do this.

This month, we join **St. Peter's UCC** in **Coupland** in welcoming **Frank Dietz**, known to many of us for his long service in ministry, as their interim pastor. Our prayers and hopes go with St. Peter's and Frank as they begin this interim period together.

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash

CCA Green Team

Several folks in our church are committed to starting a **Congregational Church of Austin Green Team**, which will explore how to make our church more "green." We'll be exploring the process of green certification set forth by **Greenfaith.org**, and hopefully, working in conjunction with other faith communities in Austin looking to become better stewards of the environment. If you're at all interested, or would like more information, please talk to **Tom VandeStadt**, **Liz Nash**, or **Marilyn Vaché**.



Beth Gleason and Sara Ross at Zilker Gardens during the Annual Iris Show

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

Return Service Requested

Deadline for June Visitor — May 21st

Mission 4/1 Earth

ONE UNITED CHURCH on a shared resurrection witness for Planet Earth during 50 great days of greening up, powering down, and shouting out for the environment! That's **Mission 4/1 Earth!**

"**Mission 4/1 Earth: 50 Great Days**" is about boldly living Jesus' let-your-light-shine proclamation in the Sermon on the Mount: "That they may see your good works!" It is an opportunity to live out our faith — in unity, as one church — for the sake of our fragile planet Earth.

Launching on Easter Monday, April 1, 2013, and continuing through the great 50 days of Eastertide, United Church of Christ congregations, colleges, seminaries, camps and outdoor ministries, and health and human service agencies will join together in a shared mission campaign to:

- Collectively offer more than **ONE MILLION HOURS** of engaged earth care, including clean up, advocacy, education, and behavioral changes that will impact the environment.
- Collectively plant more than **100,000 TREES** locally and globally in partnership with the National Arbor Day Foundation and the UCC's denominational partners around the world.
- Collectively write and send more than **100,000 ADVOCACY LETTERS** on environmental concerns to elected officials and local and national newspapers.

Mission 4/1 Earth links together four significant events — Easter (March 31), Earth Day (April 22), Arbor Day (April 26) and Pentecost (May 19) — for a sustained, aggressive and collective mission opportunity for the entire United Church of Christ. Together, we will inspire and aspire to what we can accomplish as ONE CHURCH.

Groups are encouraged to engage in creative local mission projects, service opportunities, educational programs, worship services, and media events. Your innovation will spark momentum for the initiative and stir the imaginations of other UCC people, agencies, schools, and congregations.