

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

408 West Twenty-third Street, Austin, Texas 78705-5214

(512) 472-2370 Fax: (512) 472-1175

E-mail: ucausti@swbell.net Web site: congregationalchurchofaustin.org

Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt

Rev. John Towery, Pastor Emeritus

There's a story in which we find Jesus walking through **Sidon** one day. Some folks catch up to him with a man in tow who can neither hear nor speak. Having heard that Jesus has the power to heal, they ask him to place his hands upon the man. Jesus takes the man aside, sticks his finger into the man's ears and pokes around a bit. He spits and touches his tongue. Then he looks up to heaven, sighs, and says to the man, "*ephphatha*." The man's ears open up and his tongue is set free. He can hear and speak plainly. Everyone is astonished.



There's another story in which we find Jesus buried in a tomb. He's dead. His followers are scattered. Their ears no longer hear his words. Their mouths, shut tight, are afraid to speak of him. From the source of all that exists comes a word, perhaps *ephphatha*. The tomb is opened and Jesus is released from death. His followers' mouths are opened and their tongues set free to proclaim the Good news. Everyone is astonished.

Ephphatha. In **Aramaic**, the language Jesus spoke, it means, "be opened." If someone were to ask me to sum up the message of Jesus' life, death and resurrection in two words, it would be a tough call. Would I choose. . . love God? Love others? Be saved? Turn around? Accept God? Be healed? Be whole? You're forgiven? Forgive others? Be reconciled? Follow me? Be reborn? Be thankful? See again? Hear again? Have faith? Fear not? Do likewise? Rise up? Take, eat? Take, drink? Remember me? Live again? They're all good candidates, but I think I would go with "be opened."

member me? Live again? They're all good candidates, but I think I would go with "be opened."

I think Jesus was trying to help folks "be opened" to the Spirit of God he felt and knew intimately within himself. The Spirit in which he lived and moved and had his being. The Spirit that flowed into and through him. The Spirit that radiated from him as light. The Spirit people felt loved by through his unconditional love. The Spirit that drew people to God through his acceptance of them. The Spirit that reconciled people to God and their neighbors through his friendship. The Spirit that forgave people through his assurance of forgiveness. The Spirit that enlightened people's minds with his wisdom. The Spirit that healed people through his physical presence. The Spirit that animates the new risen Body of Christ.

Ephphatha. Be opened. To God.

Ephphatha. God seeks to flow into and through you.

Ephphatha. God seeks to radiate through you as light.

Ephphatha. God seeks to love others through your unconditional love.

Ephphatha. God seeks to draw other people close by your acceptance of them.

Ephphatha. God seeks to reconcile people through your friendship.

Ephphatha. God seeks to forgive people through your assurance of forgiveness.

Ephphatha. God seeks to enlighten others through your enlightened wisdom.

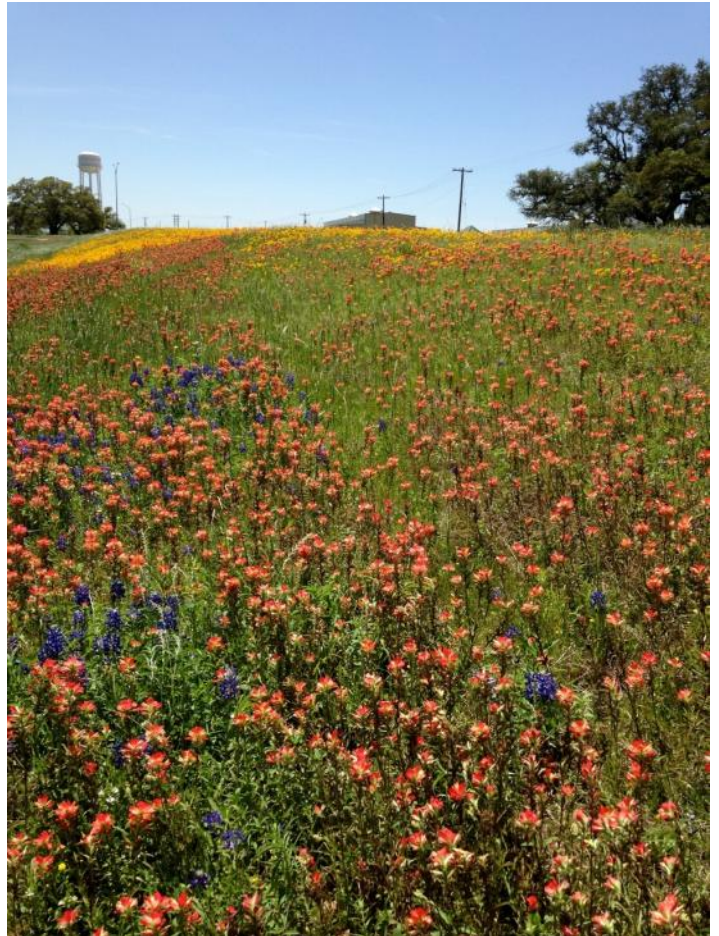
Ephphatha. God seeks to heal others through your presence with them.

Ephphatha! Be opened! And live!

Christ is risen. Indeed!



It is definitely spring in Central Texas. We had rains in October—virtually none before or since—but just in time for the flowers.



Wonderful wildflowers on the way to Houston. Bluebonnets—the few red ones are Indian Paintbrush.



It was good to see Laura Hubbs-Tait in Austin visiting her mother Cathy Hubbs. They enjoyed catching up with Sara Ross.



The flowering of the cross on Easter Sunday and the flowering of the cinder block in memory of Joyce Smith.

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

It has been a season of sadness for our church community in recent months. We lost **Lolita Binford** on February 6, **Eleanor Towery** on March 23rd, and on March 27th, **Jesse Binford**. Jesse and Lolita were involved in the church in the mid-1950s when Jesse was teaching chemistry at UT and returned to Austin when Jesse retired in 2003 from the **University of South Florida**. Jesse and Lolita were married for almost 59 years and were devoted to one another. They always sat together at the back left of the church—and helped often with the sales of free trade coffee during fellowship hour. He was an active member of the men's book club at church and also an avid bicyclist for many years. For more information on Jesse (and Lolita and Eleanor), go to the church Web page (<http://congregationalchurchofaustin.org/>) and scroll down on the home page to the lower right corner, "We Remember."



Two years ago Lolita and Jesse Binford donated the chairs their own children enjoyed to the nursery at church.

Our hearts broke even more when we learned of the sudden death of **Roger William Lytle** on **April 9th** during his afternoon nap at daycare in Dallas where his parents **Heather** and **Zac** live and work. They have worshipped

with us over the years as they were going between Dallas (where Heather is an ob-gyn resident) and San Antonio where Heather's family lives. **Roger** was baptized along with his father **Zac** at the church in a wonderful celebration on the **February 2nd**. **Tom** drove to Dallas on Monday, **April 14**, to be a part of the memorial service which was held in a park in Heather and Zac's neighborhood where they used to take Roger to enjoy the out-of-doors. More than one hundred people came to the service to honor Roger's short life. Heather and Zac asked that anyone who knew Roger do an act of kindness for someone else. After the service, participants scattered wildflower seeds which will beautify the area next year--and for many years to come. Zac, a community planner, was working on a park and now the powers that be have decided that the park will be named for Roger. Tom stayed overnight before driving home on Tuesday. That morning he stopped at a restaurant in the neighborhood and ordered some coffee and a croissant. When he went to pay, the manager said that it was on the house all day--that it was in memory of a precious baby who died—Roger.

Mary Towery Masters reports that her dad, **John Towery**, pastor emeritus of this church, is slowly adjusting to life without **Eleanor** who died in late March. He is still in hospice care at **The Cottages at Chandler Creek in Round Rock**. After a family discussion it was decided that they would try having a roommate move in with John for company. Mary says that it is working well and even though he is in hospice care (congestive heart failure) that John seems to be more involved in the activities and is enjoying seeing more of the place than he has in a good while.

After so much sadness, **Easter Sunday** was a celebration of life in the church. There were **112** folks there to enjoy the beautiful music, Tom's powerful sermon, and the flowering of the cross and the cinder block (ask anyone who was there about that) and that was followed by the traditional Easter brunch and the annual children's Easter egg hunt. **Gail Christeson** and **John Goff** and the middle and high school students did a wonderful job with the Easter egg hunt—and numerous volunteers helped with the delicious brunch. Many thanks to **Lynne Lemley** (with her divine berries and cream), **Sara Ross**, **Tommie Pinkard**, **Jaime Hadley** (who also brought some of his gorgeous irises to decorate the table), **Beth Gleason**, **Marilyn Vaché**, **Nodie Murphy**, **Pat Oakes**, **Rachel Dietz**, **Carol Burlinson**, **Betty Bodman**, **Bill Beardall**, **Barbara Burnham**, **Fran Briggs**, **Geneva Ross**, **Kristin Parkhill**, **Nancy Edison**, and others who helped. It was great to see **Cheryl Appel** visiting from **Madison, Wisconsin**, with **Vic and Betty Appel**. She was headed home later that

Brazos Association News

May

by Liz Nash

It is with sadness that I share the recent news of the death of **Ann Schoeneman** on **April 13th**. Ann was a member of the Brazos Association Executive board, a devoted longtime supporter of Slumber Falls Camp, and a faithful and longtime member of Lyons Evangelical UCC. As her obituary in the **Bryan/College Station Eagle** says, “Ann never met a stranger, cared deeply for human kind, and worked to make the world a better place.” Services for Ann were held at **Lyons** church on **April 16** with **Darrin Holub** and **Charles Stark** officiating. Our prayers are with her husband, **James**, her family, her church community, and all of her friends.

Planning for our **South Central Conference Annual Meeting, June 6-8**, at **Camp Allen** in the **Navasota** area, is continuing. We still need volunteers in several areas—contact **Linda Coats** at linda_coats@msn.com to see how you can serve. We of course encourage all of you to join us for all or part of the weekend by registering through the link at <http://www.sccucc.org/>, and to contribute school-kits to Church World Service and/or hygiene kits to **Back Bay Mission**. (Go to the Resources and Downloads link on the SCC website above for specific instructions on the kits.) Camp Allen is a lovely place. Come for a weekend of call to care for creation and a time of rest, retreat, and fellowship.

At our recent **Spring Brazos Association** meeting at **St. Peter's Church of Coupland**, we approved **Martin Garrison** for ordination in the United Church of Christ after a his **Ecclesiastical Council**, heard reports, and conducted business that included a significant new initiative. The South Texas Association has expressed interest in having a conversation with the Brazos Association about possible merger. South Texas has a smaller number of churches as members now and is looking at possibilities for its future. Our discussion concluded by charging the **Brazos Executive Committee** to appoint a group to meet with representatives of South Texas to talk about what we all need to consider as we think about this possible merger. We decided to aim for having one or two forums about it in early fall after conversations with the South Texas group take place. We ask all of you to think carefully and creatively as we have these discussions.

Finally, three seminarians and one faculty/staff member--- **Aaron Lauer, Merci Monroe, Tom Major, and Kathleen Remund** -- from **United Theological Seminary of**

the **Twin Cities** visited Brazos churches March 28th through 30th. Our guests participated in the life and hospitality of these churches in many ways, and preached on Sunday morning. Host churches were **Congregational Church of Austin, Hope United, and St. John's Burton**. Tom and Kathleen also preached at **Lyons Evangelical** after preaching at the early service at St. John's. We appreciate our churches who hosted this visit that enriches our partnership with the CUE (Chicago, United, and Eden) seminaries, as well as the willingness of these United folks to come join us for the weekend.

Blessings in Christ,

Liz Nash

Brazos Association Minister

South Central Conference Board Meeting Report

by Beth Gleason

Brazos Association Board representative

The SCC Board of Directors met Saturday, April 12th in Houston. Here are the highlights of our meeting:

2014 Treasurer's report

- Reduced OCWM giving concerns affecting the 2014 budget estimates and approved a line of credit for Slumber Falls for the next two years as they continue to build a reserve account.
- Discussion of Conference Boundaries and collaboration with the UCC Southern region.
- Phil Burnett and Ginny Brown Daniel will represent the SCC at the Southern Regional Conferences meeting April 28-29 in Atlanta.

Nominating Committee and proposed 2015 Conference budget for presentation at the June Annual Meeting.

- The Board will be presenting a deficit to the Conference for the 2015 budget.
- The Board created a working committee to discuss having a “Virtual” SCC office and using Slumber Falls resources for administration.
- Reviewed evaluations of the Conference Minister and Slumber Falls Camp Director.
- Board has begun a conversation about a merger between the South Texas and Brazos Associations.
- 2015 Annual Meeting in New Orleans, June 5-7.

Continued from page 3

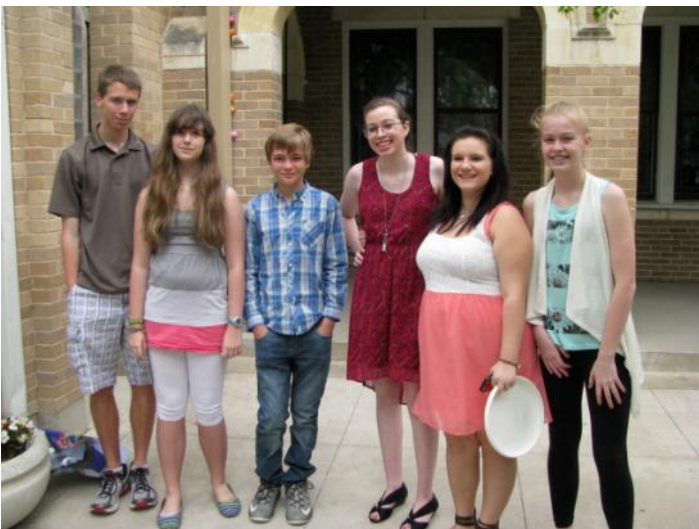
day. Sister **Debbie** had also been in town for several days but she had to go home earlier that morning. **Paul Deisler** was another surprise visitor who came up from Corpus.



The Easter egg hunt was fun for everyone.



Easter brunch set-up helpers (from left) Janet Parsons, Gail Christeson, and Ruth Koenig.



The young folks helped hide the Easter eggs for the little ones. (from left) Cameron Goff, Megan Goff, Giovanni Fracasso, Katie Lemley, Emily Howicz, and Savanna Tucker.



The younger children were anxiously awaiting permission to go out and hunt Easter eggs.

Thaisa Howorth, our child care giver for several years, is now teaching English in a school in **South Korea**. She reports that she is fine as are all of her students, but that she lives not very far from the school where so many students died when the ferry boat sank in April a few days before Easter. She commented on what a sad time it was for South Korea. She misses us and sends her best to everyone.

Betty and Bill Phillips have experienced some health setbacks that have restricted their daily activities. Bill remains in a hard cast on his right leg and foot due to recent surgery (ankle fusion) and is limited to a wheelchair and walker. Betty experienced a serious fall at home (beware of scatter rugs) and is also expecting an extended period of recovery. **Lucy Hanouille** was at the house making some repairs to Betty's computer before a voice lesson when Betty had her fall. Lucy says that Betty was surprisingly calm. Daughter **Katie** came home and took her to the hospital—Betty under her own steam at that point—and Lucy stayed with Bill. After several days at **Seton Hospital** in **Kyle**, she was patched up from her accident but will not be able to use her right arm for a good while. She was in the operating room for almost two hours: She now has a six inch titanium plate and seven screws across her shoulder, plus a pin. She had a bone graft in her right arm and bone splinters removed. She was expecting to stay a minimum of three days at **Reliant Rehab Hospital** before being able to go home. Due to the fact that Bill is also limited by his repaired foot, family and friends have all had to contribute time to travel to getting this all worked out. It appears that they may get some help from a social worker to get some at-home help for the next month. They are indeed grateful to the support of family and friends. Daughters **Stephanie** and **Katie** have rearranged their work schedules and alerted friends so that they will have a steady train of helpers through the immediate period. Bill says, "We will have

Continued on page 6

a better idea of what we need after we get settled. Betty will be ambulatory, and she will at least be able to answer the phone with her left hand. I am able to scoot around and, at least, get to the table to eat. We had not anticipated that we would get into this kind of jam; but, this is the way life is. Unusual moments can always happen, good or bad. We will count our blessings for sure."



Coffee hour with Tom VandeStadt, CUE seminarian and guest preacher Aaron Lauer, and Whit Bodman.

On Sunday, **March 30**, we enjoyed having a guest preacher, **Aaron Lauer**, a seminarian who was sponsored by CUE (Chicago, Union, and Eden seminary programs—our three UCC seminaries). Aaron stayed with the **Bodmans** for the weekend. After he arrived on Friday they had dinner at their home with **Martin** and **Emily Garrison** and **Beth Gleason**. Saturday evening he went out with a group of seminarians from **APTS**. There were three others who came to our area—two other students and one supervisor. One student went to **Hope** in **Round Rock**, and the other two went to **Burton** and **Lyons**.

Whit Bodman is still waiting until he can change his Facebook status to grandfather. He is preparing the cigar! **Betty** is looking forward to going to help with the baby after her semester is over. Their daughter and son-in-law's first child is due the end of **April**—more news next month.

Folks have been getting to know **Stelli** and **Jeff Munnis** who moved to Austin from **State College, Pennsylvania**, where he served a UCC church as pastor for three years. They moved here for Stelli's work in corporate marketing for a solar panel manufacturing company called **Sunpower Corporation**. Prior to State College they lived in the **San Francisco Bay** area in **Palo Alto** for three years, **San Francisco** for three years, and **Albany** (Berkeley) for just under three years. They moved to **California** from **Florida** for Stelli to go graduate school (She has a PhD. in psychology). While they were in San Francisco, Stelli began working at Sunpower while finishing her dissertation and ended

up staying. During the same period, Jeff attended seminary at the **Pacific School of Religion** and was ordained in the UCC. While they were in California they got involved with an organization called **Seeds of Learning** that builds schools in **Nicaragua** and **El Salvador**. Jeff has chosen not to serve a church at this time and for the last year he has been working on several writing projects. They both graduated from the **University of Florida** so they know what it is like in a college town where football is a big part of the local sports conversation and they are big football fans. They like to travel and they enjoy visiting the various Texas state parks. They visit Jeff's daughters (two in Florida and one in Colorado). Jeff has four grandchildren: **Jacob** and **Kate** with his oldest daughter **Robin**, **Paloma** from his youngest daughter **Nellie**, and the most recent is **Wyatt**, born in December to his middle daughter, **Holly**. Stelli has family in San Antonio (grandmother) and Houston (aunt and uncle). Her father lives in Florida. Stelli's mother and stepfather live in **Washington, D.C.** and is currently in Nicaragua on assignment with the **Inter-American Development Bank**. They try to visit that side of Stelli's family as often as they can. They both have websites that have more information about themselves including blogs which include their writing on various topics important to them like spirituality, poetry, psychology, and anything that inspires them. www.jeffmunnis.com and www.stellimunnis.com.

Florence Castle will be **98** years old on **May 13th!** While Florence is not coming to church any more (she gets tired and the two and a half hour stint her drivers can provide is too much for her), she enjoys getting mail. If you'd like to send her a card, her address is **2901 Del Curto Road, Austin, Texas 78704-4821**, where she has lived since 1940.

It has been awhile since we have seen **Sam Bean**, but he is staying pretty busy. He reports that life is good. He's been living at the **Sasona Cooperative** (at **Paramount & La Casa** in south Austin) since 2009. Otherwise, he has been juggling a couple of music students (www.takelessons.com/profile/samuelhenrybean), managing the co-op's kitchen, co-chairing Sunday meetings at the co-op, and pedi-cabbing on weekends to pay the bills. If anyone is interested in taking beginner guitar lessons, look Sam up. He is also sharing some reflections on communal living. Check it out at www.communityorganizingandbuilding.blogspot.com. As he is beginning to make plans to eventually become a professional facilitator, the blog is serving as a potential resource of pertinent information. It's actually patterned after another blogger's reflections—www.communityandconsensus.blogspot.com. He's a familiar face in **Ann Arbor** every November when Sam goes there for an annual conference. If you would like to listen to some of Sam's music, click here www.soundcloud.com/samuelhenrybean-gmail-com



What Is Sainthood and Who Are the Saints?

Catholics have them, so do Episcopalians... Lutherans, the Eastern Orthodox, of course. What if our church had saints? How would we recognize them? Who would they be? How would we honor them? What's the difference between a hero, a saint, and a role model? Join us at the annual retreat for fun, fellowship, food, and films as we explore a topic not much discussed in our UCC tradition.

What: CCoA-UCC Spring Retreat
When: May 2-4, 2014
Where: Slumber Falls UCC Camp, New Braunfels
Time: 3 pm Friday through 1 pm Sunday
Other: Contact Marilyn Vache for details,
mjvache@austin.rr.com

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

Return Service Requested

Deadline for June Visitor — May 21st

Continued from page 7

Juditha Burchstad in **Massachusetts**, after seeing the wildflower pictures sent with the personals query, reports that she is now totally homesick for **Texas**, especially after waking up to an inch of ice pellets on the ground in mid-April. Husband **Fred** has planted some lupines in their backyard, but they are no bluebonnets! **Nancy and Dennis McCormick** reported that they enjoyed the pictures of the wildflowers, too, and that they don't have bluebonnets in Montana.

Mel and Pat Oakes enjoyed a long weekend in early April in Houston for a wedding of a cousin. Making the drive especially enjoyable were the marvelous wildflowers in full bloom. When they got back to Austin, Pat (who volunteers as a docent three hours a week at the **LBJ Library**) spent two amazing days working at the **Civil Rights Summit**. She was stationed at the freight elevator near the other elevators and right on the way to the green room. As a result, she got to see and shake hands with some of the true heroes of the civil rights movement (**Representative John Lewis, Andy Young** (a UCC pastor at one point), **Julian Bond, Vernon Jordan, Bill Russell, Jim Brown, Mavis Staples, and Graham Nash of Crosby, Stills and Nash**—and she saw **Presidents Carter and Clinton**). She was not able to work the day **President Obama** was there, but she and Mel watched his whole speech broadcast live on the Longhorn Network.

History Corner

Florence Castle celebrates her 98th birthday in May. She and her husband Joe arrived in Austin in before the outbreak of WWII from Illinois.



Here is Florence Castle with her trumpet in front of the church-- 1940 Florence and Joe Castle were our church musicians on piano and violin for many years, but also used the church during the week as a music studio.