

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt

Rev. John Towery, Pastor Emeritus

I recently read an interview with **Dr. Ursula Staudinger**, psychologist and Director of the **Robert Butler Columbia Aging Center at Columbia University**. Prior to working at Columbia, Dr. Staudinger worked with several other psychologists on the **Berlin Wisdom Project** at the **Max Plank Institute**. For many years, she has been interested in wisdom—what wisdom is and how people become wise. After studying the topic for many years, she has concluded that wisdom is rare. Not many people become wise in the course of their lives. What follows are some of Dr. Staudinger's observations regarding wisdom.

Some cultures are more conducive to wisdom than others. Some cultures revere wisdom by encouraging introspection and thoughtfulness, and by recognizing wisdom's impact on the practicalities of everyday life and social well-being. Western culture, with its focus on individualism and materialism, does not support growth in wisdom as much as some other cultures support it.



You have to look beyond yourself to be wise. Wise people learn to look beyond themselves, possibly but not necessarily to God. They recognize a transcendent dimension to life. The reality in which they live is bigger than themselves. Time and space are more expansive than their particular life circumstances. They exist in a much larger context, and they recognize that their perspective is exactly that, one perspective from which they look out upon a much bigger reality.

You have to challenge yourself constantly to be wise. One must challenge one's own thoughts and comfort-level by refusing to settle into habitual patterns of thinking and acting. One must be perpetually curious and willing to grow, which means a willingness to change and to challenge the established order. This often entails removing oneself periodically from the established order in order to distance oneself from its habitual patterns. To step outside the box in order to see the box in which you and many others live.

You must overcome the obstacles to attaining wisdom. Many of the obstacles to wisdom are found within everyday conventions and expectations, in the way people habitually think and expect others to act. One must be willing to pay the price for thinking and acting differently. New thinking and acting, even wiser thinking and acting, is often rejected at first. Wisdom entails a degree of non-conformity, and many people don't want to live against the grain or rock the boat.

Wisdom does not necessarily come with age. People do not naturally become wiser as they grow older. One must actively seek wisdom, work hard to become wise, apply effort and take risks. One must remain curious and open-minded, seek out new experiences, and suffer the failures from which one learns. Many people go through life and get old without doing much of the work that wisdom requires. Only a few set out along wisdom's path when they are young or middle-aged, which means only a few become truly wise elders.

Wisdom is not the same as intellect or mastery. One may be very intellectual and know a great deal about many things, and one may have mastered a subject or a skill, but this does not make one wise. Likewise, wisdom is not taught in school or the university. Wisdom is not the same as transmission of knowledge. Wisdom entails a far deeper aspect of knowing how to live one's life and relate to reality. Knowledge and mastery may certainly contribute to wisdom, but they are not themselves wisdom.

Wisdom is not the same as happiness. Because wisdom means challenging oneself and moving out of one's own comfort zone, it means learning to withstand discomfort, confusion, adversity, opposition, and rejection, and it means withstanding these conditions in a manner that furthers growth and well-being rather than producing bitterness and defensiveness. A wise person may be deeply happy at times, but a wise person does not pursue happiness as an end in itself.

Finally, not many people can be wise. True wisdom is rare, not only because it is so difficult to achieve, but because society can only tolerate so much. To maintain stability, society needs a degree of convention and order, a habitual set of patterns of thinking and acting. If everybody constantly rocked the boat, thought outside the box, lived against the grain, and challenged every convention, society would unravel and there would be no food on the table. Wisdom is the necessary antidote to habit and the way-things-are, but without habit and the way-things-are to challenge, wisdom itself cannot exist. Wisdom and the-way-things-are require one another in order to create the living dynamic of stability and change. The wise understand this dynamic.

Reflecting on these qualities of wisdom, I think of Jesus Christ, whom we recognize in the Christian tradition to be the very embodiment of wisdom. But we also recognize Christ to be the embodiment of love. Thus he challenges convention in a radical fashion, but in a way suffused with love. Indeed, the depth of his love itself radically challenges convention, and manifests a certain wisdom.

I also question whether wisdom is an either/or proposition, as in one is either wise or not wise. Perhaps there is a threshold some people cross, and in doing so, they become truly and outstandingly wise. And perhaps there are some people so habit-bound, narrow-minded, opinionated, conformist, risk-adverse, and reactionary that it is difficult to find a shred of wisdom within them. But perhaps between these two poles, wisdom exists by degree. People are more or less wise. More or less on that path of cultivating wisdom. At any rate, I'm grateful for the degree to which our church has been blessed with wisdom. And love. And for the way we live out that dynamic in which we keep our boat stable enough to proceed together on our journey, and rocked enough to keep us from getting lulled into irrelevance.

TOM

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

Art From The Street

Congregational Church of Austin has participated in **Art From the Street** for quite some time, now by displaying works of art in the Fellowship Hall for members and friends to view. The exhibitions have been vibrant and engaging, and several people have purchased works from this exhibition. The price list and signup sheet is on the high sideboard in the CCA Fellowship Hall. In order to continue these exhibits, we will need a new coordinator to take over. It is really a small commitment, as there are only three exhibits in a year. The works are delivered from the **Art From the Street Program**, and two workers manage hanging the pieces. A list of works is available throughout the exhibition on top of the high sideboard. Then people buy paintings and that completes the circle! As a result, we support creative Austin in the process. We will lose this vital and simple program if we don't have someone overseeing it.

Talk to Nodie Murphy if you want details about this simple job.

Personals by Pat Oakes

The youth from our church joined with the youth from **University Christian** and **University Baptist** churches at University Christian Church on Youth Sunday, May 4th. **Savanna Tucker** led a litany, **Megan Goff** led the prayer for communion, **Katie Lemley** played a cello solo for the offertory and sang in the combined choir, and **Emily Howicz** was one of three youth involved in a "sermon conversation" with the three speakers taking turns throughout the presentation. Our trio, our choir, and **Pastor Tom VandeStadt** also played a part in the service. Since our church sanctuary is too small to accommodate the congregations from the other churches, next year the service will be at **University Baptist**. Thanks to deacons **Ruth Koenig** and **Janet Parsons** who were late to the service as they stayed behind at our sanctuary to direct any latecomers to where the service was being held. **Reuel Nash** noted that it was like Pentecost in early May!

Beth Gleason participated in her third **Avon Breast Cancer Walk** on May 17th, but this time she walked in Boston. She has done the **Charlotte, North Carolina**, and the **New York City** Avon Walks, and she plans to do the **Chicago** walk next year. In fact, she is going to do all eight Avon Walks around the country. She walks only on the first day which is about 28 miles, and this year her college roommate came up from Connecticut to walk with her. They walked past many famous Boston landmarks, including her college (**Simmons--Gwen Ifill** also graduated from there), the **Swan Boats**, and **Fenway Park!!** It was also her **40th** high school reunion on Friday and her



Beth Gleason at the finish line of the Boston Avon Walk for Breast Cancer in May.

mother's 86th birthday on Sunday....a trifecta! They started the walk at 6:30 am Saturday in a downpour but it was sunny and clear by lunch on the **Jamaica Way**. Next month there will be a report on Beth's graduation from seminary on May 25th.

Florence Castle celebrated her **98th** birthday with an impromptu birthday party at her home on the afternoon of May 13. Her son Paul came home early from work, good friend **Heide Harris** showed up with a birthday cake (chocolate—Florence's favorite), and Pat and Mel Oakes brought roses. They all had a great time visiting and sharing old family pictures of Florence's and her late husband **Joe**. Paul even found an old CD with **Joe Castle** playing Texas swing music which was recorded first in the '50s.



Birthday girl Florence Castle with son Paul and friend Heide Harris.

On a very happy note, music teacher **Norma Hawes** was selected as **Teacher of the Year** at **Pleasant Hill Elementary School**. She was also an AISD finalist for Teacher of the Year.

Whit and Betty Bodman are delighted grandparents of **Clara Jordan Matthews** (Jordan is Betty's maiden name.). **Clara** is the first in the family of the next generation. Her parents, **Elizabeth and Greg** are doing wonderfully. She was born on **May 3**, Saturday evening, at the respectable time of 7:33 p.m. at 6 pounds 7 ounces and 19 1/2 inches long. Betty is spending two weeks visiting them and helping out in **New Jersey**. Whit has to wait until mid-June to go and is settling for daily pictures. He promises to share at least one in the **July Visitor**.

We all remember and honor the memory of **Matt Blackstock** who was a cherished part of the church for more than 80 years (his grandmother started bringing him when he was about six). From the **Austin American-Statesman** article by **Mary Ann Roser** (May 14) "**The Family Medicine Residency Program** has established an endowment in honor of **Dr. Mathis Blackstock**, a beloved physician who was a mentor and educator to generations of family medicine doctors in Austin. Money raised by the endowment will go to programs that support the education of

Brazos Association News

June

by Liz Nash

Many of us are gearing up for the **South Central Conference Annual Meeting** that the **Brazos Association** is hosting, **June 6-8, at Camp Allen** in the **Navasota** area. We have a hardworking planning committee led by **Linda Coats**. Our “last minute” help plea, for those of you who can, is for people to sell raffle tickets for our raffle to benefit **EdenHill Communities** (contact Linda at linda_coats@msn.com) and for people to help with receiving **Church World Service** school kits and **Back Bay Mission** hygiene kits (contact Judy Sherman at jsherman1940@gmail.com). Our choir, led by **Jess Wade** of **Friends Congregational**, will be rehearsing before worship Friday evening, so be sure to come early and add your voice to worship on Friday. We have churches preparing entertainment for Saturday night, a very generous number of cookies, and getting ready to send teams to help with receiving the school kits and hygiene kits. We have people preparing to set up the worship and speaker area to be sacred space, people preparing for communion, excellent musicians, people working to help

our banquet tables be festive, people preparing a meditation trail, churches preparing tri fold posters. We have pastors planning worship, folks preparing what promise to be excellent workshops, folks preparing to lead special interest groups, people preparing displays, and people preparing the CUE seminary (**Chicago, United, Eden**) benefit book sale. And many more people are working, including our **Conference Board**, officers, and ministry staff, to prepare. Perhaps most of all, our Friday preacher and keynote speaker, **Rev. Dr. Jim Antal, Massachusetts Conference Minister**, and our Sunday preacher, **Rev. Tom Van- deStadt of the Congregational Church of Austin**, are preparing to inspire us and cause us to consider the fullness God’s call to us to care of the earth in this critical time. We hope you will join us. Call **Burton Bagby-Grose** at the **South Central Conference** office to check on room availability if you have not already registered.

Our **Association Executive Board**, at our **June 21st** meeting, will be planning a proposal for our process of discussion about merger with the **South Texas Association**. As many of you know, South Texas has approached us to request talks about merger. We anticipate inviting South Texas folks to a “meet and greet” with Brazos folks as part of the fellowship time at Annual Meeting. We also tentatively anticipate having one or more forums for our churches in the early fall. We invite any of you to give input to this process. It is likely we will form a committee for this purpose, but at this point, you can contact me (lizknash@gmail.com) with questions. Look for more details later as we make these plans.

In other good news, **Dan DeLeon**, pastor of **Friends Congregational**, traveled to Atlanta, Georgia to record two sermons and two interviews on “Day1” (<http://day1.org/>), a radio program and podcast series that broadcasts selected sermons and interviews with preachers and “the voice of the mainline churches.” It was formerly “The Protestant Hour.” His sermons will be broadcast on **June 22 and 29**. Congratulations to Dan for this well-deserved honor!

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash
Brazos Association Minister



Beth Gleason, center, surrounded by her church family on graduation day. (l to r) Nancy Edison, Sarah Darter, Whit Bodman, Christy Kuhner, Jaime Hadley, Reuel Nash and Liz Nash.



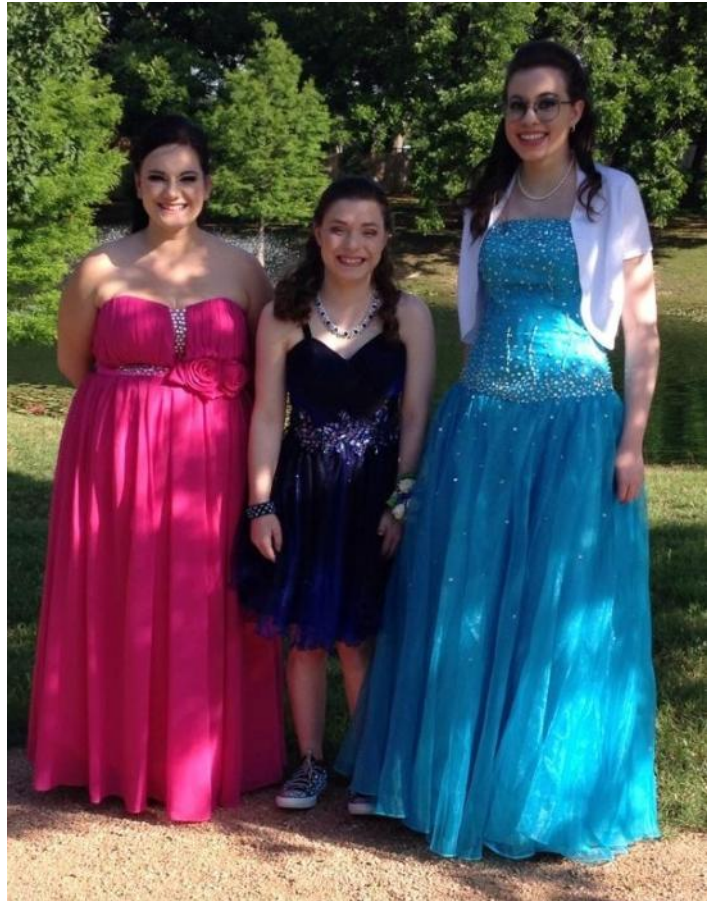
The VERY muddy Pam and Harrison Tucker.

While **Savanna Tucker** was practicing for Youth Sunday which was on May 4, **Harrison** and **Mom** (Pam Tucker) did the **Muddy Miler** (aka Mudfest) in Round Rock on Saturday, May 3rd. They didn't get as muddy as last year and, thank goodness, it wasn't as cold!

Emily Howicz enjoyed her senior prom on **May 17th** with dates **Katie Lemley** and **Sydney Middleton** (who happens to be a member of our neighbor church, **University Presbyterian**). A fun time was had by all! And now countdown to Emily's graduation...

Beth Placek enjoyed two fun trips in April—her annual trips to **Washington, D.C.** and the national park at **Glen Echo** where she enjoyed great dancing and then later in the month to the folk dance festival in **Lafayette, Louisiana**.

Nodie and Dennis Murphy celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Sunday, May 25th. They married on Saturday, May 25th, 1964, the same day Nodie graduated from **Newcomb College** (at that time a "sister" of Tulane University) that morning and both she and Dennis graduated from Tulane the following Monday. They celebrated here 50 years later by having a renewal of their vows during the church service (both wearing their choir robes!) followed by a reception in the fellowship hall. Daughter **Sarah** and the kids came from San Antonio (son-in-law Larbi was traveling on business) and son **Seth** was also there. **Ned and Faye** were far away in upstate New York, but they



Looking gorgeous for the prom were Emily Howicz, Sydney Middleton, and Katie Lemley.



Dennis and Nodie Murphy one week shy of their 50th wedding anniversary!

were here in spirit. Sarah is a wonderful cook and made a gorgeous cake and delicious cookies called Springerli. Next month there will be photos of the actual event.

Bill and Betty Phillips have really had a time of it this last six weeks or so. First Bill had surgery on his ankle which left him wheelchair bound until it heals. Then Betty had a terrible fall and broke her shoulder. She was in rehab after

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leaving the hospital, and then was sent home. When she went in to her family practice doctor to be checked on how her shoulder was coming along, she had a severe GI bleed, an ambulance was called, and she was taken to Seton Central where she spent a week undergoing tests while in terrible pain from her shoulder. It was determined that she had a bad duodenal ulcer which has now been cauterized. Daughter **Katie** and **Stephanie's** partner **Kathy Weiner** stayed at the hospital with Betty while Stephanie was at home with her dad. Betty had to have four units of blood, and her last blood test showed that she is now rebuilding her blood levels on her own. Bill was supposed to get his cast off in early May, but the doctor decided to be cautious and waited until the 23rd. They are all so grateful for the help of friends, especially **Lucy Hanouille**, who have come to their home in **Creedmore**. They have also been relieved to know that they will have physical therapy in their home as they are both really house-bound for the time being. Betty was unexpectedly back in the hospital on May 18th, but was hoping to be released to go back home soon. Bill and Betty, we will give you a standing ovation when you make it to church—not for a while, we know—but soon, we hope!

Jaana Rehbein sends us greetings from northern Germany! She and her daughter **Ella** had a wonderful several week visit in Austin and enjoyed worshipping with us over **Holy Week and Easter**. She and Ella had an uneventful, pretty relaxed trip back home for which they are most grateful. As you can see from the picture below, Ella has turned four in the meantime. Her birthday was May 13th., the same day as Florence's. Jaana says, "While toasting here, we were thinking of our friend in Austin who turned



Ella celebrated her 4th birthday the same day Florence celebrated her 98th!

98 years, right? Maybe you can keep Florence and Ella in your prayers. We miss worshipping with you! (How neat that there is the "beauty-prayer" by Tom on YouTube... we can join you this way :-<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10iTy6eoKSg>).

Thanks much also for the many special moments, for example at Easter we had with you all! All the best, Jaana and Ella."

John Moore is delighted to announce the marriage of his daughter **Sarah** to **David Racino** on Sunday, April 27th at the **Stonehouse Villa** in **Driftwood**. His son **Travis** was a groomsman and many members of both families were in attendance. **Sarah** and **David** are living here in Austin. Sarah is a personal assistant and nanny to several families and David works for a company that makes specialized refrigeration equipment for bottling craft beers.



Sarah (Moore) and David Racino at their wedding reception at the Stone House Villa in Driftwood.

Thaisa Howorth, our most recent child caregiver before Sarah, reports that things are going well in her teaching program in **South Korea** near Seoul. She teaches English from 4-10 p.m. and is busy earlier in the day with lesson plans, exercising, and cooking. She heads to work between 2 and 3 for meetings or more preparation. She and co-workers go out for a late dinner some evenings. She regrets that she still does not know any Korean, but she has tried cooking some Korean food—she likes all of it very much, even kimchi. She really misses **Barton Springs Pool**. She has hopes of being home in Austin at some point this summer, so don't be surprised if she drops by to say hello.

Congratulations to our child caregiver **Sarah Fox** who graduated with a B.S. in Human Development and Family Sciences from UT on **May 17** at 8 a.m. at the **Erwin Center**. Sarah noted that it was good to be early in the day as parking was not as much of a problem. Sarah will be in Austin for the summer, is giving some thought to graduate school, but is really looking forward to a backpacking adventure with the **National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS)** in the fall.



Our child caregiver Sarah Fox at her UT graduation

Mel and Pat Oakes had a busy and fun-filled eight days in **San Francisco** with their daughter **Mardie**, her husband **Tony Deifell**, and their son **Durham**. Durham celebrated his **2nd** birthday, Mel his **78th**, and Pat and Mardie enjoyed being together on Mother's Day. They visited Pat's second cousins in **Petaluma**, had a wonderful picnic



at Mel and Pat Oakes with Mardie, Durham, and Tony at a Mother's Day brunch in their neighborhood. Pat is not wearing any glasses as she lost them the day before at the Exploratorium.

Golden Gate Park with old family friends, went to the **Exploratorium**. Most importantly, they worked on the **1906** house that **Mardie and Tony** bought in the **Bernal Heights** neighborhood of San Francisco just four houses up from the apartment they have been renting. To say the house needs a lot of work is putting it mildly, but it has great potential. They visited Lowe's many times (Durham's favorite) and a number of lumber yards and hardware stores (off the beaten tourist track in San Francisco). Ever handy Mel was able to figure out the inner workings of double-hung windows with sash weights and they were able to get one window stripped, sanded, painted and almost completely re-hung before it was time to come home.

Spirituality Book Club Sponsored by InterFaith Austin

The June meeting will be on June 9th at 7 p.m. at Scholtzsky's at 218 S. Lamar. Please come with a suggestion for a July book.

Our June book is: **My Name Is Asher Lev** by Chaim Potok.

Asher Lev is a Ladover Hasid who keeps kosher, prays three times a day and believes in the Ribbono Shel Olom, the Master of the Universe. Asher Lev is an artist who is compulsively driven to render the world he sees and feels even when it leads him to blasphemy. In this stirring and often visionary novel, Chaim Potok traces Asher's passage between these two identities, the one consecrated to God, the other subject only to the imagination.

Asher Lev grows up in a cloistered Hasidic community in postwar Brooklyn, a world suffused by ritual and revolving around a charismatic Rebbe. But in time his gift threatens to estrange him from that world and the parents he adores. As it follows his struggle, *My Name Is Asher Lev* becomes a luminous portrait of the artist, by turns heartbreaking and exultant, a modern classic.

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

Return Service Requested

Deadline for July/August Visitor — June 23rd

The Congregational Church of Austin seeks a caring, compassionate person who loves children to teach Sunday School. The Sunday School teacher will lead a class for elementary-aged children each Sunday during the church service. The teacher shall interact with the children in a manner that reflects the values and mission of the Congregational Church of Austin, a progressive Christian church with a strong focus on social justice. The Congregational Church of Austin is an Open and Affirming church of the United Church of Christ. A curriculum that aligns with the mission and values of the church will be provided. Approximate hours are 10:45-1:00 every Sunday.

Required qualifications: The Sunday School teacher shall:

- *Have prior experience caring for, teaching or mentoring elementary-age children in a group setting.
- *Hold a current certification in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) for both adults and children, and provide the church with a copy of the CPR certificate prior to the first day of employment.
- *Undergo all applicable background checks required for adults working with children under the Congregational Church of Austin's safety protocols and policies, and be subject to those protocols and policies at all times.

Preferred qualifications: The Sunday School teacher should have:

- *An educational background in education and/or child development, specifically relating to elementary-age children.
- *Prior experience as a church Sunday school teacher or similar position caring for and fostering spiritual growth for elementary-age children.
- *Classroom or similar group experience working with a wide age range.

If interested, please send a letter of interest and a resume to Rachel Dietz at mspecoul@gmail.com.