

# THE VISITOR

**The Congregational Church of Austin    United Church of Christ**

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**Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt**



In 2014, the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding published a report entitled, “Manufacturing Bigotry, A State by State Legislative Effort to Push Back Against 2050 By Targeting Muslims and Other Minorities.” The report describes the profound demographic shift occurring in the United States today, and how different people are responding to it. Forecasts indicate that by 2050, if not sooner, white Euro-Americans will no longer form a majority in the United States. Instead, the United States will become a “majority-minority” nation. People of color, and people from a variety of other-than-European ethnic groups, will together form the majority.

As the report notes, “These demographic shifts will have major political, socio-economic, legal, and cultural impacts on public discourse and public policy.” In fact, these demographic shifts are already having major impacts. Citizens, opinion makers, media figures, legislators, and candidates for public office are today reacting to this historic transformation in a variety of ways.

Some are embracing the emerging diversity by looking for ways to increase understanding and mutual respect between people with different colored skin, different ethnicities, cultural practices and languages, and different religions. I think of Austin’s *iAct* as a good example of a community-wide effort to promote healthy diversity and multi-culturalism.

Others are resisting the emerging diversity. They feel resentment and anger, fear and hatred toward the “others.” They feel the “others” pose an existential threat to the United States and what it means to be an “American.” More frequently, they’re lashing out at the “others” in public.

And, as the report chronicles, state legislators representing constituents who’re feeling threatened by this demographic shift are pushing back against it by passing legislation at the state level that seeks to disenfranchise immigrants, people of color, and Muslims. For example, many states have passed, or have tried to pass, legislation that denies immigrants the ability to get a driver’s license, voter ID laws that disproportionately affect immigrants and African-Americans, and anti-Sharia laws, whose purpose is to send the message that being Muslim is incompatible with being “American.”

## Church Announcements

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The report concludes: “Ultimately, the data supports the fact that there is deep anxiety around the changing demographic nature of American society and the approaching demographic tipping point... While not seeking to downplay the unique challenges anti-Muslim bigotry poses to American pluralism, the findings clearly suggest Islamophobia is part of a broader trend of exclusion that various minority communities have experienced, and continue to experience.”

I think that we, as Christians who pray every week for God to empower us to be Christ-like liberators, healers, and reconcilers, need to be aware of these profound demographic shifts, as well as the deep anxiety this transformation is producing in some people. We need to be sensitive to the people who’re being resented, excluded, and disenfranchised, and stand in solidarity with them as they struggle for justice and equality. But we also need to be sensitive to the people who’re feeling that resentment and anger, fear and hatred. Simply condemning these people isn’t productive, or Christ-like.

We’re called to find ways to address this profound transformation our nation is undergoing in ways that seek to bring about healing and reconciliation, greater understanding and mutual respect. We’re called to be peace-makers, and peace-makers are needed most where conflict exists. We have an important role to play, a positive role to play, as this demographic transformation unfolds.

It’s my hope that as part of our “We Stand With Our Muslim Neighbors” ministry, our church will work more closely with Christians, Jews, Muslims, and people from other faiths and traditions to address the deep anxieties produced by this demographic shift. It may not be easy work, but it is Christ’s work, which makes it our work.

**The Front Porch Lunch ministry** is in need of a few more volunteers to serve lunches. Lunch is served to area homeless (mostly LifeWorks guests) every Thursday of the month in our Fellowship Hall. If you are interested, contact John Goff or our church Administrator, Rimma Aguirre.

**Micah 6**, the consortium of 11 University area churches working together to meet the needs of the homeless, need food and servers for its weekly **Sunday afternoon drop-in center** at University Baptist church. The drop-in needs volunteers who can **cook** a healthy dish for about 25 people, or come to the drop-in center to **help serve** those dishes. More information on the drop-in center can be found at:

Micah 6 Youth Drop-in Center -  
<http://m6sydic.weebly.com/>

Micah 6 also needs clothes for its **Fig Leaf clothing distribution center**. Donations can be brought to our Sunday morning worship. If you have any questions or need more information, please see our church’s Micah 6 representative, Whit Bodman.

### Church Leadership

Trustee Co-Chairs	Don Brown & Bill Campbell
Deacons Chair	Janet Parsons
Outreach Team	Reuel Nash & John Goff
Moderator Co-Chairs	Barbara Burnham & Bill Beardall
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Pam Tucker
Christian Education	Rachel Dietz
Coordinators	John Burlinson
Clerk	Betty Bodman
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Webmistress	Sara Ross
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

## Church Announcements, continued

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### Say “Hi” to your Outreach Coordinators

John Goff and Reuel Nash are serving as “Outreach Coordinators” this year. As most of you may be aware, the outreach coordinator position is actually quite new. Not long ago we had a Board of Christian Outreach that oversaw our outreach activities. Or at least tried to. The truth is, most of our outreach activities – Freeze Night Shelter, Front Porch Lunch, Micah 6 Food pantry, Green Team, Care Team – are autonomous and self-directed among a dedicated team of volunteers. Outreach happens at our church whether or not we have a Board or a Coordinator. Quoting shamelessly from an insurance company commercial: it’s what we do. In a recent effort to streamline our Church’s governance, we therefore decided, along with Christian Education (which now operates with paid staff), to eliminate the Boards and replace them with two coordinators each.

So: what does an outreach coordinator DO in our church? Or, better yet: what SHOULD an outreach coordinator do? As we see it, we have 3 primary responsibilities:

1. Outreach Coordinators are representatives of, and advocates for, the outreach mission or our church. One of us sits on Coordinating Council, and it is our job to ensure that outreach concerns factor into the church’s decision-making. We are YOUR representatives. If you have any sort of concern about, or idea for outreach activities, speak to Reuel or John and we can ensure that it gets a hearing.

2. Outreach Coordinators are conduits of information regarding outreach. We keep the Coordinating Council informed about outreach activities. We inform the outreach teams about decisions of the coordinating council that affect them. But perhaps our most important function in this regard is to keep the Congregation informed about outreach activities and opportunities for participation. This is where we recognized the most room for improvement – which begins with a renewed effort to present outreach moments. These are indeed good, but we can also do a

lot better in making sure that outreach information is published more often in the church’s newsletter and highlighted on our web page.

3. Outreach Coordinators provide advice to the Trustees regarding our Cooperative Responsibilities budget. Until this year we have only had to recommend minor modifications, but with the large budget shortfall this year, we have had to manage sharp reductions in some of our donations. Those of you who were at last Sunday’s congregational meeting are aware that there was a strong consensus for trying to offset the larger cuts – such as OCWM, Huston-Tillotson, CUE - with special directed offerings through the year. We coordinators were tasked with organizing these events, so this is something that we will incorporate into our budgetary responsibilities.

So there you have it – that’s what an Outreach Coordinator does (or WILL do). Don’t hesitate to chat with John or Reuel about any outreach topic on your mind.

## Personals

by Pat Oakes

**Sunday, April 24**, was a special day in the life of our church community. **Beth Gleason** led a service celebrating the gifts of the ordained women in our midst. Each of the women gave a brief synopsis of their faith journey and the work they have done. Speakers were **Rev. Cecile Adam, Rev. Sarah Bentley, Rev. Sarah Darter, Rev. Jo Jensen, and Rev. Dr. Liz Nash**. They were honored with corsages and a special coffee hour reception. Unable to attend that Sunday were **Enid Ross** (a chaplain) and **Amy Villwock** (Family and Children's ministry at St. John's UMC). We are truly blessed as a congregation to have so many fine women clergy among us.



**4/24/16** The church honored our ordained women--  
**Liz Nash, Cecile Adam, Sarah Darter, Sarah Bentley,**  
**and Jo Jensen**

The church family has had some notable graduations this month. The **Nash** family traveled to **New York** to beam proudly when **Becky** graduated from **Long Island University Global College** on **May 12** in a group of about 25 in that program. The commencement included perhaps a few thousand graduates in other programs. Graduates in Global Studies each gave a five minute talk summarizing their college experience, their plans, and their acknowledgements of faculty and family at a separate, more intimate, event in the afternoon. Becky received the **Leadership Award** for her efforts to organize a student government that would be able to function with students all over the world. Her studies were done in **Turkey, India, Taiwan, Australia, Bali, and Costa Rica.**

Her thesis analyzes the work of photojournalist **Chris Arnade** in the **South Bronx**, and suggests that a new structure for journalistic ethics is needed to adequately tell the stories of marginalized people.



**5/11/16** The Nash clan in NY for Becky's graduation  
from Long Island University--**Ellie, Liz, Becky, Annie**  
**and Reuel**



**5/12/16** Becky Nash giving her 5 minute talk about  
her amazing college experiences at her graduation  
from Long Island University Global College

Our children's **Sunday School** teacher, **Amy Rivera**, will be away for several weeks this summer, which means we will have to temporarily suspend our children's Sunday School. From **June 11** through **July 4**, Amy will be studying Spanish in **Xela, Guatemala**. That means there will be no Sunday School on June 12, 19, 26 and July 3. We wish Amy well, and hope she has a safe and exciting trip!



Also beaming with pride this month were **Robin Chapman** and pastor **Tom Vandestadt** when they went to **San Antonio** for daughter **Alex's** graduation from **Trinity University** after getting her **Master of Education** degree on **May 14**. Alex has accepted a position teaching second grade at **Shawnee Trail Elementary School** in **Frisco**, which is in the Dallas area. She'll be moving to Dallas this summer. Her boyfriend will begin work on

his Master's degree at **Southern Methodist University** in **Dallas** in the fall, and she's hoping that one of her best friends moves to Dallas as well. For those of us who have been at the church for awhile, it is fun to remember the good times that Alex and Becky had together at the church when they were younger.

**Savanna** and **Harrison Tucker** think that summer is already here and are having trouble keeping their heads in school for the last two weeks before the summer break really begins. Savanna made an application to **Austin's Language Arts and Science Academy (LASA)**, which **Pam** says was more involved than any college application she ever made! And Savanna met the entrance requirements and was accepted to LASA. Only one hitch: an out-of-district student may apply to LASA and may be accepted, but in order to attend LASA, they must have their primary residence in Austin. So the **Tucker-Goodgame** family found a small house just north of Anderson Lane and are preparing to make that our primary residence by fall. Savanna was very touched by the heartfelt and kind words by **Jen Howicz** when presented with a **Bible** from the church on **May 16** for her 8th grade graduation. Harrison is working hard to maintain good grades in school and is having a blast with the sports offered at his school. He was a star for his basketball team, and generally had the most steals and the most points in each game. After a 3 year break from soccer, he is playing on the school team and also scoring most of the goals each game and having a great time.



4/23/16 The wedding party of **Lauren (Will)** and **Jarod Kohrt**. Jarod's sister **Kristen Parkhill** is at the middle left

**Debby Kohrt's** son (and **Kristen Parkhill's** brother), **Jarod Kohrt**, married **Laurel Will** in **Ripon, Wisconsin**, on **April 23, 2016**. **Kristen** was a bridesmaid, and **Caleb** and **Zozey** led the procession. Jarod is from **Menominee, MI**, and **Laurel** is from **Germantown, WI**. They now live in **Jefferson, WI**. **Laurel** has a Bachelor's degree in Psychology with a Master's degree in Counseling Foundations. She works at **Genesee Lake School** in **Oconomowoc, WI**, as an **Assistant Program Supervisor**. Jarod has a Bachelor's degree in Physical and Health Education. He works for **Rock County Juvenile Justice Center** in **Janesville, WI**, as a **Behavioral Officer**.



4/23/16 **Zozey** and **Caleb Parkhill** at their uncle **Jarod Kohrt's** wedding to **Laurel Will**

## Heart of Texas Association News

June/July

by Liz Nash

At our South Central Conference Annual Meeting in Houston on June 3-4, we will welcome Rev. Dr. Don Longbottom (known as Dr. Don) as our new Designated Conference Minister. Dr. Don comes to us from his current call as Designated Minister of Church of the Beatitudes in Phoenix, Arizona, and he comes to us with extensive experience in interim ministry. His position is a little different from that of Interim Minister in that he can, if he so chooses, submit his name for consideration for the permanent Conference Minister position alongside other candidates once the search process is initiated again. (In most cases, an Interim is not considered for the permanent, or settled, ministry position.) The South Central Conference anticipates waiting for a year to consider re-starting the search process in order to let Dr. Don establish a ministry and relationships among our churches. I know he intends to make it a priority to connect with our churches and people in his work here. I hope all of us will be ready to welcome him and offer prayers for his work as he begins his ministry among us.

As we complete our registration and preparations for sending youth to the National Youth Event in Orlando at the end of July, the exciting news is that we will be sending about of 60 youth and accompanying adult chaperones from this Association. (As of this writing, there are still a few days to register, so the number is not yet finalized.) This is tremendous group, coming from a number of churches all across the Association. Sending our youth to the National Youth Event is, in my experience, one of the real gifts we can give them -- a faith building experience that conveys what our church is all about, while also giving them the chance to meet UCC (and this year, also Disciples of Christ) youth from across the country. Our Association has put aside money for several years to help fund this trip, allowing us to give each youth and adult chaperone \$150 toward travel expenses. The South Central Conference is also

donating money to help defray travel expenses. Your generous support is part of what has helped encourage our youth, their leaders, their families, and their churches to raise the substantial amount of money to make this trip. Thank you!

At our last Committee on Ministry meeting in April, we voted to accept Jenny Perkins as a Member in Discernment. Jenny is a very active member of Bethany Congregational UCC in San Antonio. She is attending Lexington Theological Seminary, a seminary affiliated with the Christian Church/Disciples of Christ, in their online program. I hope many of you will get to know Jenny and will welcome her as she continues her preparation and discernment for ministry.

Faith UCC, New Braunfels is celebrating their 50th anniversary all of this year. This spring and summer, they are lifting up their baptism and confirmation ministry, the ministry to those who are married, and their substantial mission/outreach work. The culminating celebration will be next October. We rejoice with and give thanks for the ministry of Faith!

Blessings in Christ,  
Liz Nash  
Heart of Texas Association Minister

## Personals (continued)

by Pat Oakes

After the forecast of severe storms threatened to cancel the **Hill Country Ride for AIDS**, Mother Nature smiled upon the cyclists and volunteers, giving them one of the most beautiful days ever enjoyed on earth. **George Hetrick, Robin Chapman, and Tom VandeStadt**, members of the **Care Communities Cycling Team**, lined up with hundreds of other cyclists to enjoy pedaling up and down the hills of **Spicewood** and **Round Mountain**. When all was said and done, George, Robin, and Tom raised \$3,670 for the cause, much of it coming from church. In total, the HCRA raised \$512,091.91. George, Robin, and Tom thank all of you who contributed to their fundraising efforts.



5/14/16 - left to right - **David Miles** (Don's brother from Statesville, NC), **Don**, and **Richard Miles**, Don's son from Washington, D.C., atop **Enchanted Rock**



5/2/26 **Chencho Flores** and **Beth Placek** at their wedding with guests **Lloyd** and **Libby Doggett**

Congratulations are in order for newlyweds **Beth Placek** and **Chencho Flores**, who married at **The White Horse** at 5th and Comal on **Sunday, May 1st**. Beth, who loves to dance, met Chencho at The White Horse. Chencho is the phenomenal accordionist for the long-time Austin band **Los Pinkies**. The wedding was at 4, followed by a chance to visit, and then Los Pinkies played their usual Sunday set at 5. Everyone enjoyed the lively music and lots of folks danced. Beth, who has worked for years volunteering for various Democratic causes, was delighted when **Lloyd** and **Libby Doggett, Gonzalo Barrientos**, and several other political folks joined in the festivities.

**Don Miles** celebrated his **80th birthday** over the weekend of **May 13**. He managed to climb **Enchanted Rock** near **Fredericksburg** just before an approaching thunderstorm triggered a mass evacuation of the mountain. About a dozen family members arrived Friday for a happy hour, a seafood dinner at **Doc's**, a popular local restaurant, and an outdoor after-dinner chat session overlooking **Lake Marble Falls**. Saturday saw various small groups climbing the mountain or shopping in Fredericksburg or Marble Falls. About 25 guests participated in the birthday party itself at **La Quinta Inn & Suites**. That was followed by a couple of hours of socializing in Don's "Presidential" suite. Fellow choir member **Greg Futch** was among those attending. Sunday, Don and half a dozen remaining family members gathered at **Bluebonnet Café**, which is frequently rated for having one of the best breakfasts in Texas.

**Doyal** and **Tommie Pinkard** are getting settled in at the retirement community **College Walk** in **Brevard, N.C.**, although Doyal has been hospitalized with heart problems once again since their arrival there last month. He was sent from the hospital in Brevard to **Mission Memorial Hospital** in **Asheville**, about 35 miles away. Tommie has had numerous adventures finding new and different ways to make her way to and from the hospital. Doyal was scheduled to be transferred to rehab in Brevard but there was a glitch with the paperwork,

so he was spending a few extra days in the hospital in Asheville. Tommie notes that there all kinds of wonderful activities to enjoy at College Walk, but so far not much in the way of opportunity.



**Jonathan Carruthers**, grandson of **George Carruthers** and **Marilyn Gaddis**, received his **Eagle Scout** award on **May 15th**. His Eagle Project involved clearing a trail, starting a new trail, and removing invasive plant species at **Mansfield Dam Park**. The work crew included six other scouts and three adults on some very warm weekends! He is graduating from **Vandegrift High School** in June and will be attending **Baylor University** in the fall, majoring in **Music Education** (clarinet). He was one of the young people helping with last year's Christmas dinner at the church. It was great to see George and Marilyn in church on the 8th--they were going to a concert in Austin that afternoon so they got a "twofer" for coming up from their home in **San Marcos**.

In line with our banner initiative of "Standing with our Muslim brothers", our church has been invited to participate in an **iftar dinner** on **Wednesday, June 8th**, hosted at the **University Christian Church**. Held during Islam's holy month of **Ramadan**, from **June 8 - July 4th** this year, an iftar occurs just after sunset when Muslims break their Ramadan fast with a communal dinner. The **Dialogue Institute** invited our church, University Christian and **University Baptist** to participate in our first iftar on June 8. The meal is catered and free. The food is delicious; there is usually a meat, vegetable, grain, salad, beverages, and always baklava. This is a unique opportunity to eat at the same table with other Muslims and learn about their faith traditions over a good meal. Please join us by registering your attendance at the event-brite link in a separate e-mail later in May.

On **Saturday, April 16th**, **Reverend Dr. John Dorhauer** was installed in the second of three installations around the country as the new **General Minister and President** of the **United Church of Christ, New York City** was the first installation; **Seattle** was the last. This second installation was held in **President Obama's** home church, **Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, Illinois**, and **Beth Gleason** attended as a representative of the **South Central Conference**. The theme for the service was from Revelation 21:5, "All things new..." and it was an impressive service of prayerful covenant to bless our new leader by the Associations and Conferences, in cooperation with local UCC churches. The service highlights included three different sermons and a magnificent gospel choir. Most clergy were from the Midwest (there were none from the southwest!) and there were representative leaders from many other denominations to welcome Rev. John. What a great day for the UCC...and let us lift up Rev. Dr. Dorhauer's vibrant new ministry for our still speaking church. We are so pleased that our own Beth Gleason represented all of us at the installation.



**Sat 4/16/16** Rev. John Dorhauer's Installation as the new UCC president with South Central Conference representative, Beth Gleason, in Chicago, IL. He is holding his grandson.



A triumphant **Beth Gleason** posed at the finish line of the **Avon Breast Cancer Walk in Washington, D.C.**, on **May 1st**. Beth thanks everyone at the church who donated to the cause.

**Mel Oakes** celebrated his **80th birthday** on **May 11th**, with not as much pomp and circumstance as Don Miles, but a great celebration was enjoyed with **Beth** and **Mardie** who came for the big day (**Sarah** could not get away from school again). Beth could only stay for 36 hours, but Mardie was able to stay for 5 days. Beth arrived in time to help make Mel's annual German chocolate cake. Instead of climbing Enchanted Rock, the girls accompanied Mel and Pat on walks up and down the long block across the street. **Pat** is still using a walker but is getting stronger every day.



5/11/16 Mardie, Mel, Beth, and Pat Oakes on the occasion of Mel's 80th birthday



5/15/16 Mardie Oakes and Katie Phillips (Bill and Betty Phillips daughter) enjoyed getting caught up at coffee hour after not seeing each other for many years

**Florence Castle** celebrated her **100th birthday** in fine style in her home where she has lived since **1940** --entertaining the guests by playing her beloved grand piano she has had since she was a teenager (tuned the day before for the birthday party) with folks singing along to show tunes. She and her son **Paul** were delighted to have her nephew **Wayne Caskey** (visiting from **Baltimore**) and her great-niece **Susan Caskey** (visiting from **Boulder**) in attendance. Chips and dips, punch, cream puffs, and chocolate cake (of course) were enjoyed by all. In addition to the 5 folks from the church were longtime friends **Carol Carruthers** and **Heide Harris**.



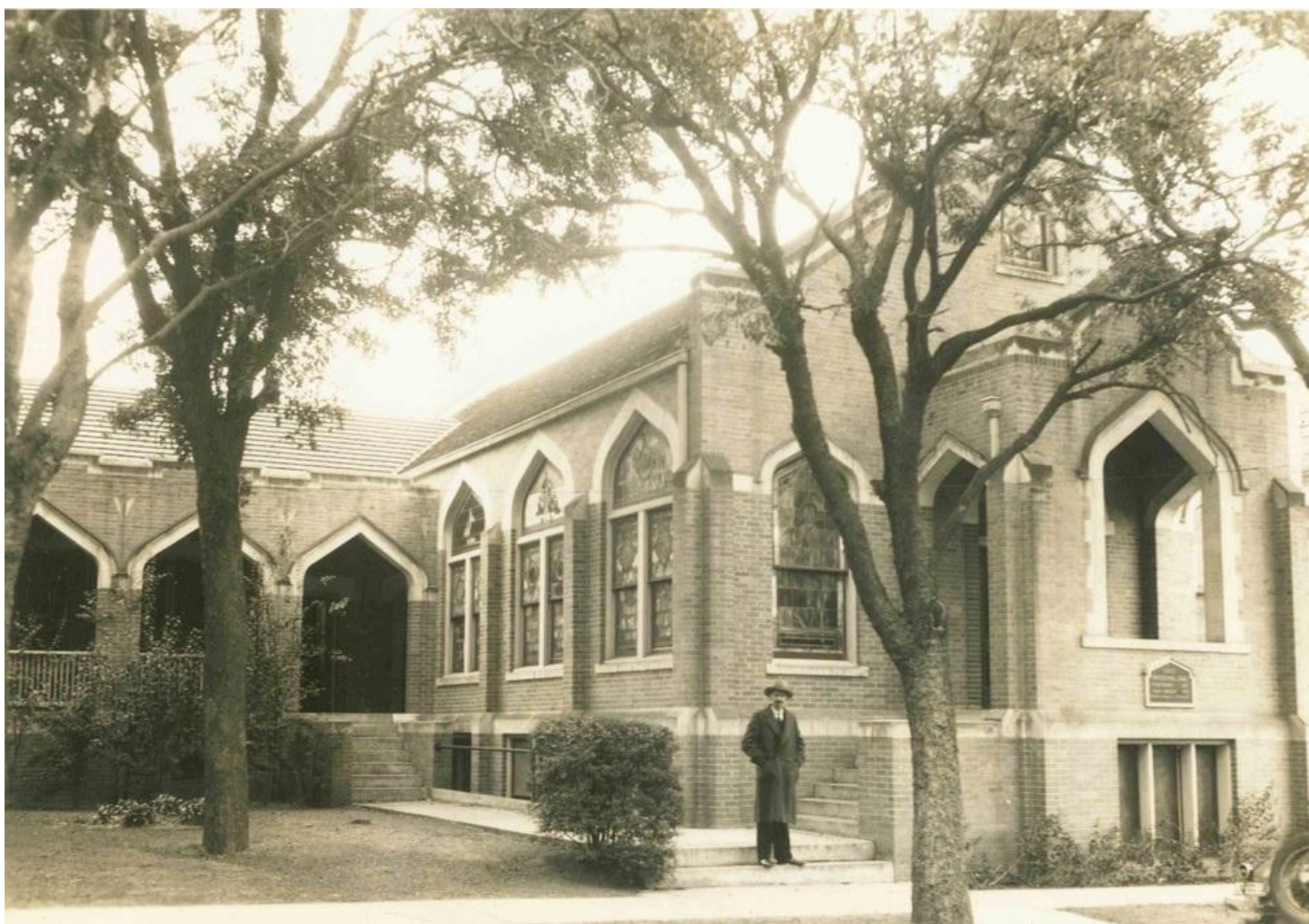
5/20/16 Florence Castle, longtime pianist at the church, at 100 years and one week at her birthday party: Dave Ross, Florence Castle, Sarah Ross, Nodie Murphy, Mel and Pat Oakes

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**Return Service Requested**

## August Visitor Deadline—July 20, 2015

**History Corner**  
by Pat and Mel Oakes



Rev. Sevier E. Frost Jr. (1899-1978) served the church from 1929 to 1935. The photo shows Rev. Frost, (Jack) standing in front of the church, Note the lack of accessibility with stairs into both the sanctuary and the fellowship hall.