

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: congregational.faithweb.com

Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt

Rev. John Towery, Pastor Emeritus

Those of us who gather as our church's discipleship group have decided to read Parker Palmer's book, *A Hidden Wholeness, The Journey Toward An Undivided Life*.

Palmer spent years leading workshops teaching people how to participate in dialogue groups called "circles of trust." In particular, he helped them develop speaking and listening skills that enabled their souls to reveal and articulate themselves. For those who participated in these dialogue circles, the result was often a richer and fuller blooming of their lives.



Our lives are continuously conditioned, in ways both subtle and powerful, by forces, circumstances, and people external to us. We pay close attention to these external conditions. A great deal of our conscious awareness is focused upon them. We're constantly evaluating and responding to these external conditions, and planning how we'll navigate our way through them.

But we're not encouraged to pay the same amount of attention to the internal forces and conditions at work within us, and by and large, we don't learn how to identify and skillfully work with them. We're not as familiar with our own internal landscape or the internal community within us, because we spend far less time paying close attention to what's happening within us than we do to what's going on outside of us. As a result, we typically don't cultivate an intimate relationship with our soul—our deepest aspiration and authenticity. And when we're out of touch with our soul, our soul experiences itself as unknown, ignored, exiled, or unappreciated.

It's not drawn out and given a voice with which to communicate.

This can become a source of deep underlying unhappiness, a nagging sense of dissatisfaction that one is not really who one is supposed to be, should be, could be, or wants to be. This unhappiness or dissatisfaction may be subtle or it may be acute. It may be easy to ignore, or a good deal of effort may be required to cover it up, dull it, or distract one from it. Our culture, with its heavy emphasis on consumption, entertainment, spectacle, and quick fixes to avoid pain and feel better, has countless ways for people to cover up, dull, or distract themselves from unhappiness and dissatisfaction. But none of them really address the soul.

And that's what Parker Palmer is trying to help people do—get in touch with their soul—by giving their soul a voice with which to articulate itself, and ears that'll listen to it. The purpose of a circle of trust is to help people get more deeply in touch with their souls by entering into a relationship of deep and intimate trust with a small group of people. The person speaking may begin with a vague and hazy sense of what needs to be said. There may be something bugging someone deep inside, something one can't quite get at or clarify, or something one needs time to process verbally before it

deep inside, something one can't quite get at or clarify, or something one needs time to process verbally before it begins to make sense. Maybe a sense of unhappiness or dissatisfaction. Or a joy, desire, or aspiration. Someone may need to uncover something or bring to light a part of one's self that's been hiding in the dark. Perhaps an important decision hangs in the balance and someone needs to articulate the various internal voices to see the different sides of an issue in order to bring clarity that leads to discernment.

This is an incredible gift to the one who's speaking because it enables one to give voice to deep parts of one's self. It allows a human soul to articulate itself in a safe space. Most importantly, it gives one the opportunity to hear one's own soul, perhaps for the first time, or from a deeper place than ever before, and to thereby cultivate a more intimate relationship with one's own soul. Palmer writes, "As we grow in our ability to listen this way, we give the gift of 'hearing each other into speech.'"

For some time now, our church's discipleship group has been practicing something similar to what Palmer describes in his book. But it's my hope that a number of us can read his book, learn from it, and begin to develop in our church a more intentional practice of listening and speaking. A more intentional practice of opening up and blooming into the people God has created us to be.

If you're not part of our church's discipleship group but would like to be, let me know. If you're not interested in being part of it, or can't because of schedule or other reasons, but would like to read the book, please do so, and let me know that you're reading it so you can be included in any discussion and future development of this kind of ministry should we decide to pursue it.

Tom

Workers Defense Fund Project Celebration

Workers Defense Fund is hosting their 10th Anniversary event, "**Celebrating a Legacy of Women**" on Thursday, **Sept 27** at 6:30 pm. Location: Seton Administration Offices, St. Vincent de Paul Auditorium, 1345 Philomena Street. Tickets: \$30 Regular Admission: \$60 for Legacy tickets (premier seating and reception.) For more information go to www.workersdefensefund.org.

Austin Interfaith Civic Academy The Many Faces of Homelessness

Austin Interfaith is hosting a Civic Academy called "**The Many Faces of Homelessness**" on **Saturday, September 22**, from 9 am to 12 noon, at **First United Methodist Church, 1201 Lavaca St.** The event will include a panel with representatives from several homeless and housing advocates from Austin, a break-out session for more detailed and focused discussion, and a wrap-up and call to action (what you can do). The timing for this educational event coincides with the city bond election in November, which will include bond money for more affordable housing and permanent supported housing. Several members of our church are providing leadership for this event.

Church Leadership

Trustees Chair	John Goff
Deacons Chair	Joe McMillan
Christian Outreach Chair	Bill Beardall
Moderator	Reuel Nash
Treasurer	David Ross
Financial Secretary	Pam Tucker
Clerk	Betty Bodman
Historian	Jaime Hadley
Web mistress	Sara Ross

Brazos Association Fall Meeting

The Brazos Association Fall Meeting will be held on Saturday, **October 13**, at Weimar United Church of Christ. The meeting starts at 10 am and will end with lunch served by the Weimar church. We will be discussing and possibly planning an Association mission trip to **Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi.**

Personals
by Pat Oakes

The church and the wider Austin community suffered a terrible loss on July 3 when **Matt Blackstock** (1925-2012) died peacefully at home. The melanoma that he had been fighting for more than three years was the cause of his death. Matt and his brother **David** started coming to the church about 1931 with their grandmother **Hallie Barrickman**. With the exception of a few years during the late 1940s and 1950s, for Navy service (1948-1953), medical school and his early medical practice in Kerrville, he was at church almost every Sunday (up until within a few weeks of his death) — singing



Matt Blackstock
Sunday, Dec. 11, 2011

in the choir, serving on various boards, and being a wonderful, caring presence in the church. He had a delightful, quiet sense of humor and was a wonderful listener — and is so missed. His memorial service was held at the **Unitarian Universalist Church** in Austin as our tiny sanctuary would have come nowhere near accommodating the more than 300 people who came to celebrate a life well-lived. There is a wonderful trib-

ute to Matt and his life as a physician in Austin on the church web site: <http://congregationalchurchofaustin.org/cca/Mathis%20Blackstock%20Memoir.pdf>. A week after Matt's death, his widow **Mary** was involved in a car accident in Matt's '07 Honda near her home when it somehow surged across 2 lanes of traffic and hit a pickup truck. The Honda was totaled, but no one was hurt (Mary's watch was broken and she had a cut on her arm, but that was it). The police came, but she was not ticketed. It has been a joy to have Mary and Matt's daughter, **Clare Sprinkle**, worshipping with us several Sundays recently. We all love sharing memories of Matt. **Mary and Clare** had a good time visiting in Mary's hometown of Abbeville, Louisiana, where they had time to relax, reflect, and write thank you notes.

The congregation bade a fond farewell to our long-time (almost 10 years) violinist, **Andy Strietelmeier** on July 29th. As his farewell gift to us, after the service he played "Czardas," a wonderful Gypsy themed bravura piece

which was taught to him by his grandfather was a violinist who came from Central Europe. Andy is leaving to fill a one-year post teaching orchestra, violin lessons, and music appreciation at Denison University in Granville, Ohio. He arrived safely and is now set up in a lovely house (selected



Farewell to our longtime violinist **Andy**, part of our amazing musical team. (l-r) Jonathan Geer (piano), Colin Ferguson (cello), Nodie Murphy (music director), and Andy Strietelmeier. 7/29/12

by **Denita**, his fiancée--they are marrying this fall) about two blocks from his building where he will be teaching. When he first arrived he was without gas in the house, so he was delighted when it was turned on so he could cook food and take heated showers. **Andy** reports that Granville itself is a surprisingly pretty little town of about 6500 that



Nodie Murphy making a presentation to **Andy Strietelmeier** honoring his almost 10 years as our church violinist--7/29/12. (l to r) Cathy Hubbs, Betty Bodman, Jesse Binford, Florence Castle, Barbara Burnham w/ granddaughter Samantha, Chester Rosson, Robin Rosson.

is located about 30 miles east of Columbus. Apparently founded shortly after 1800 by settlers from out east, the place still consciously aims to keep a New England ap-

pearance and atmosphere, including banishing almost all big chain stores, quite a contrast with surrounding towns. His new address is 111 Thresher St., Granville, Ohio 43023. Andy encourages us to take care of the trio, or as



Andy Strietelmeier with old friends Robin Rosson, Samantha and Julia--7/29/12 Robin, Julia and Samantha have moved back to Austin much to the delight of their parents.

he says, "Well at least the guys, Amy (Harris) can take care of herself pretty well. Amy will be playing violin in the trio."

John Goff and Gail Christeson celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary by taking a 2-week trip to **Greece** in July sans kids. They started by touring major archaeological sites in **Athens, Mycenae, Olympus, and Delphi**. They then flew to the island of Samos and took a ferry over to **Kusadasi, Turkey**, from which they toured the biblical city of Ephesus. Afterward they came back to Samos and spent a week on board the sailboat Angelina touring the Dodecanese Islands. Each day included sailing to another island, touring about during the day, and then partaking of the local food and wine at a Greek tavern in the evening. They highly recommend the islands, but suggest visiting earlier in the summer or later in the fall when it is not so hot! **Cameron and Megan** had their own adventures with grandparents in **Bainbridge Island, Washington, and Victoria, Canada**.

Beth Gleason had a great time visiting family in Maine in August. A highlight was preaching in her mother's home church there. She also enjoyed a lot of rain while there--a real novelty for us here in Austin--although we have had more rain this summer than last.

The Briggses enjoyed a week touring the Alaska inside passage along with 50 other travelers and 19 crew aboard a small ship. They visited **Sitka, Juneau, Skagway, and Glacier Bay National Park**. One day was spent in **Hobart Bay** taking ATV tours, kayaking, and going out

on Zegos (those New Zealanders are so clever). They saw glaciers up close and plenty of wildlife including orcas and humpback whales, black bears and grizzlies, and an eagle trying to take out a puffin. To make it even better, there was sunshine on all but one day. **Fran** says if she can return to Earth and Texas, it might be worthy of a poem. And, by the way, she has had two poems published this summer— one in Illya's Honey, the *Dallas Poets Society Journal* and one in *Red River Review*, an online poetry magazine.

Speaking of poets, **Bill Phillips** is delighted that his book of poetry, *The Oyster-Stuffed Locker*, is now available through <http://www.createpace.com/3799748> . It's also available through Amazon. The poems are infused with memories of Bill's life experiences which include his growing up in a military family which moved frequently, going to high school in **Heidelberg, Germany** during the post-war occupation of Europe, actively participating in the civil rights and peace movements of the 1960s, and working with children and adults with special needs.



Bill Phillips' book of poetry, "The Oyster-Stuffed Locker."

Lucy Hanouille thanks the entire congregation for the wonderful outpouring of love and support in her time of illness. The surgery on a cyst behind her knee was successful, the growth was benign and each day, by God's grace, she get stronger. We look forward to having you back in the choir, Lucy!

Doyal and Tommie Pinkard spent a week in New York in August, getting to know their granddaughter, **Daphne**. She is surprisingly bright, of course, for eighteen months old. Son **David** played tour guide, taking everyone to historic places like Franklin Roosevelt's home and library and the nearby Vanderbilt estate, getting them all aboard the ferry and then taking a walk on **Staten Island** to view the impressive memorial to the residents who were lost on 9-11. Also, Doyal and Tommie celebrated their 63rd anniversary with David and Suzanne, and for the first time, attended an off Broadway play for which David had composed the music and handled the sound design. Two early morning adventures included finding the hall to the bathroom lined with diapers serving as beds for three baby dolls and two toy puppies, and then showering with six

ducklings and a big green turtle. Tommie says that the most fun, though, were the mornings spent with Daphne in **Brooklyn's Prospect Park**, watching her on the slides, swings, and merry-go-round, and feeding goats and sheep in the park's little zoo.

Don Miles spent some quality time staffing a booth at the state convention of the **Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce** in San Antonio in mid-August. He was recruiting sponsors and re-enactors for the 2013 re-enactment of the Battle of Puebla at Camp Mabry. He is launching four websites to generate some "buzz." He is also working hard on proofreading the final galleys of his novel (*Cinco de Mayo, The Novel*) and getting it back to the publisher. The novel is set in that period — due to come out in the fall. More information on that in next month's Personals.



Don Miles with battle commander Chuck Young and former Austin Mayor Gus Garcia at the Battle of Puebla re-enactment, May 5, 2012.

Ben Marroquin and **Beth Placek** had a great time in **Vancouver** mid-July. They had a bayfront room in the Sylvia Hotel (old and atmospheric) across from English Bay and the seawall, next to **Stanley Park**. They went to **Granville Island** and **Bowen Island**, adopted a favorite coffee shop in the "hood," enjoyed parts of two music festivals, took long walks in the gorgeous coal harbor section, ran on the sea wall! They had a great visit with Ben's friends **Debbie** and **Karen**. Beth was surprised to encounter a raccoon who jogged with her on a trail in Stanley Park! They (Beth and Ben--not the raccoon) highly recommend the west-end area and the Sylvia Hotel and plan to return!

Paul Deisler writes from Corpus Christi to report that there is still fun to be had in the world. His daughter, **Jane Deisler-Seno**, who lives in Corpus Christi, spent the last fifteen years of her marriage taking increasingly difficult personal care of her husband, **Shigemitsu (Shig) Seno**, until his death in December of 2010, with no time off. Paul lost Ellen in September 2011 after her long illness. This spring it occurred to Paul that both of them should retreat from reality for a time by going on a **Caribbean** cruise in late

July. It was Jane's first cruise and her comment, when it came time to debark was, "I wish we didn't have to get off the ship." Paul felt the same way, but reality called. The ship, about a year old, was the **Carnival Magic**, a 15-deck, 130,000 ton behemoth. For comparison, the ship Paul served on during WWII was a pee-wee of only 800 tons; however, the Magic is about 95,000 tons smaller than the largest cruise ship in the world. Even among giants there are relative pee-wees. Paul took his walker with him because, with his cane, it would have taken forever to get to dinner and even "mild" land tours would have been impossible. By reserving cabins far down in the ship, Paul and Jane could see the sea rushing by, up close, from their cabin windows when they awoke in the morning, giving the impression of being on board a ship as opposed to lodging in a luxurious Las Vegas hotel. Their cabins were at the stern, but the ship was so well insulated that all they heard was a gentle, reassuring rumble from the 19-foot diameter screws. **Jamaica, The Cayman Islands and Cozumel** were examined, one by one, and then back to Galveston. All the tours were excellently conducted and "easy" for Paul. The most relaxing stop was on **Isla de la Pasión**, forty-five minutes from Cozumel by catamaran. There they sat and sipped limeade and ate a slow meal, watching the fun on a beach of pure white sand and discussing **Pinochet, Neruda** and other famous folk with the head waiter, an obviously educated man. In due course, the descent from Heaven came and they returned to Corpus Christi after a detour to San Antonio to visit **Ellen's** and **Shig's** graves at the National Cemetery at Ft. Sam Houston. Jane and Paul visit the graves every so often. The visits are saddening but beautiful. Neither Jane nor Paul would miss them for any reason. Many of us remember her and will enjoy reading about her amazing life. Check the church Web page for the link.

Many folks remember Austinite **Kathleen Strong** whose grandmother **Josie Trenckmann**, was one of the early members of the church. She took the admonition that no story was too small for the Visitor. Her report--"I'm out of oatmeal, will go to store and get more!" Thanks, Kathleen!

Former member **Dan Jeffery** wowed the crowd at the **Umatilla County Fair** parade (Umatilla County is located in NE Oregon) on August 4. He played the guitar on the Hermiston Warming Station float. Dan, continuing with the kinds of service he was involved in here, is a volunteer at the Hermiston Warming Station, a coalition of community members from various non-profits, congregations, and other social welfare helping groups who ensure that homeless folks have a safe, warm place to sleep when temperatures drop below freezing in Hermiston. Dan and his wife Carol and several other friends started the group in November of 2011 in a downtown storefront loaned to them at no cost by a member of their church. Dan attributes the success of the group to his wife's leadership skills, a bold ecumenical alliance, and good people from the public, law

Brazos Association News

August/September

by Liz Nash

On Monday, July 9th, 26 youth and adults from the **Brazos Association** joined with several other **South Central Conference** churches to take chartered buses to the **UCC National Youth Event** at **Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana**. The whole group from the South Central Conference, including one additional church whose group flew and our Conference Minister, **Douglas Anders**, numbered about 70 people. When we arrived on Tuesday, we joined approximately 2500 youth and adults from all over the United States, all of the Collegium of Ministers that lead the UCC, many other national and conference UCC representatives, and a few who traveled from other countries. NYE was four days of inspiring talks and music; lots of energy; workshops on all kinds of faith and justice related topics; many opportunities for service; grand fellowship; and a chance to meet youth from all over who are passionate about our faith communities, environmental sustainability, caring for the least among us, and justice in this world.

We heard all kinds of tremendous speakers, many of whom had “made a way out of no way” in sharing their incredible gifts in spite of great obstacles, like **Lolisa Gibson**, who does full time HIV/AIDS advocacy after finding out, at age 17, that she had contracted HIV from her mother at birth; or MK Asante who, after being kicked out of many schools finally had a teacher who helped him find his calling as a writer and now, while still in his twenties, has published several books, is a college professor, and has made an award winning film with Maya Angelou. Perhaps most inspiring was one of the youth keynote speakers, **Miah Noel Yager** from Boulder, Colorado. Miah, speaking with a speech impediment and spurred on by the cheers of the audience each time she stuck on a stutted word, shared an amazing, articulate, and dynamic testimony about her faith and her church that left many near tears. And she shattered a stereotype, too, when she shared with us that she has Down's Syndrome.

It was a special joy to attend a workshop that youth from **United Christian** led on “Christ Centered Social Networking” in which they helped (using a Twitter feed) the group to figure out how social networking can be used in more than a surface, advertising/cheerleading way in Christian ministry to help care for each other and inspire people in discipleship. **Ken White, Associate Minister of United Christian**, led a workshop on Confirmation that had great attendance and discussion. **Douglas Anders** led a Community Town Hall with the title that we can all understand: “How to share your faith without being a bore, a theological know-it-all, overbearing and self-righteous.” Throughout the time, it was a great joy to be part of the 6

moving encounters and sharing between youth and adults and among the youth. Leaders of the UCC spoke and joined with us, the worship and concert music had many people out of their seats to sing and dance, and we, as the theme invited us to do, imagine now more fully a world of extravagant welcome, a healthy world, a world where differences are embraced, and a church that is one. For the kids we were with, imagining such a world is not a stretch. We can be inspired by them as they energize our church to do God's work. Thanks to all of you for helping fund our travel.

Our blessings and prayers go with **Tim and Amy Tutt** and family as they prepare to move to the Washington, DC area, as well as with our brothers and sisters at United Christian in Austin. Tim has resigned as United Christian's senior pastor to accept the call to be the senior pastor at **Westmoreland Congregational UCC** in Bethesda, Maryland. He has served United with passion, wisdom, and an open heart and spirit in a time of real growth for the church. He is a friend and valued colleague to many of us. Tim and Amy return to many friends at Westmoreland, since they moved to United from Briggs Memorial Baptist Church, which merged with Westmoreland in 2005. The Tutt's last day at United is August 12.

We encourage folks from all of churches to join us at our **Brazos Association Fall Meeting, Saturday, October 13**, at **Weimar United Church of Christ**. The meeting starts at 10 am and will end with lunch served by the Weimar church. We will be deciding about and possibly planning for an Association mission trip to **Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi**. The mission and work of Back Bay has changed and expanded since **Hurricane Katrina** brought so much destruction to the area. **Anne Wehrly**, currently on the board of Back Bay, will be leading a period of sharing and discussion about the current Back Bay ministry, the people they serve in the Biloxi area, and how their work camp program operates. If we decide to plan a multi-church Association trip there, we will be deciding on the group size for our reservation and recommending dates from the list of available dates in the future. Back Bay attracts work campers (adults and youth) from churches all over the US, and they fill the schedule early. This trip, therefore, would probably not happen until 2014, but it will be something exciting for us to plan to do together. In addition, we are inviting youth from our Association to come and share their experience at the National Youth Event that you so generously helped fund. The Weimar church always extends a warm welcome, so we know it will be a great day. We hope you will plan to join us!

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enforcement, media publicity, and great volunteers. He says that Austin's freeze night shelter program came up many times in the conversations leading to the startup. They wanted to let the community know that they plan to be in business again this winter, so decided to enter the float following the parade theme of "Wagon Wheels to Ferris Wheels." They decorated a friend's pickup truck to resemble a cold snowy night with a few folks gathered around a fire. The "fire" was an electric fan on its side blowing orange, red, and yellow crepe streamers. Dan got in some acting chops since it was 100 degrees when the parade started. He reports that it was one of the coolest and



Dan Jeffery playing guitar on the Hermiston Warming Station float in the Umatilla County (Oregon) Fair Parade on Aug. 4,

most fun things he has ever done. Carol took the photo just as the parade was starting and Dan says, "It might be the first picture of me as an adult that I actually like!"

It was a lovely surprise in July to greet a visitor at church--and then to find out that it was **Michael Erwin** who had served as our cellist for 4 years from 1985-89. Michael was in town for a conference at Anderson High school on music technology. In a very funny coincidence, **Pat Oakes** had met Michael at **Interlochen** several years ago when



Former church cellist (1985-89) Michael Erwin with Florence Castle on July 15, 2012

they were there helping babysit for their grandchildren while daughter **Beth** worked at the music festival. At that time they realized that they had a connection to Miami where his mother was a dear friend of Pat's piano teacher. They did not recognize each other from 20 years prior in Austin. Michael is now a music teacher in Miami and is married to **Deanna** who is a bassoonist and music teacher whom he met at Interlochen. They are members of **Coral Gables Congregational Church** and know a high school classmate of Pat's—a small world indeed.

Carol and Fred Scott are celebrating the arrival of their beautiful new great-niece, **Leonora Rose (Nora) Lynch**, who arrived on August 20th. Carol notes that, as a first-born herself, her heart goes out to Nora's three-year-old big brother Emmet. Here, at last, he has met the baby sister he has been announcing to everyone and has found it to be a big change! Carol and Fred spent some time with him for the first several days.

Longtime members of the church will remember **Ruth** and **Allan Case** and their two daughters **Julie** and **Emily**. Tragically, Ruth was murdered in 1986 (still unsolved) leaving Allan with 2 little girls to raise. Pat found a photo of him and Ruth when she was pregnant with Julie at the baby shower the congregation gave for them and sent it to Allan. Julie was home visiting in Austin at the time with her husband **Chris Maloney** and was delighted to get the picture and is having it framed. She and Chris went by the church to see if it was still there (it is!!). They all remember the church very fondly. Allan remarried some years later, but sadly lost his wife **Janet** to cancer 2 1/2 years ago. Allan reports that his condition is stable at present and he continues to drive short distances and uses a walker to go to the Senior Center on Millwright on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Mel and Pat Oakes had a delightful visit with the **Oakes/Buck** family in **Iowa City** in mid-August. They were there when school started, so got to see **Emily** off to 6th grade and **Ethan** off to 4th. **Beth and Eugene** moved to a new home in May, so it was fun to see that. Other highlights included taking the kids fishing, actually catching two small blue gills and cooking them for dinner (Grampa Mel resurrected his old fish-cleaning skills and passed them on to Emily and Ethan), and listening to Emily (violin), Ethan (piano) and Beth (viola) rehearse for an upcoming recital. Pat had an unexpected visit to **San Francisco** in the middle of July as daughter and new mother **Mardie** developed a kidney stone and needed some help. Baby **Durham** got lots of hugs, **Mardie** got help with moving and finding a nanny and getting ready to go back to work, the stone got blasted to smithereens (new vocabulary word-lithotripsy) and all is well. **Mardie and Tony** celebrated their 7th wedding anniversary on the 20th of August. Daughter **Sarah** and her husband **Joe** had a terrific hike-filled trip in mid-August to **Jackson Hole** and are now back at work.

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Return Service Requested

Deadline for October Visitor—September 21

Brazos Association News *Continued from page 6*

We also are blessed with the news that Scott Spence will be ordained to ministry in the United Church of Christ on Saturday, October 6th, at 3 pm at United Christian Church in Austin. Scott has been called to serve as the Pastor of St. John's United Church of Christ in Robinson, Texas near Waco, where he has been serving as the Acting Interim Pastor. Scott graduated from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary last year, is a member of United Christian, and was approved for ordination at an Ecclesiastical Council at the Brazos Association meeting last spring. We rejoice with Scott, his family, and St. John's that he has been called and will serve "next door" to the Brazos Association. In the United Church of Christ, the Association ordains, so we encourage members from all of our churches to join us as we celebrate Scott's ordination and lay hands on him to bless him in his ministry.

We also rejoice with **Jennifer Veninga**, a member of **United Christian**, as she journeys to **First Congregational Church, Berkeley, California** to be ordained on September 30 by the Bay Association of the Northern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ. Jennifer has been in care/in discernment with the Bay Association while earning her Ph.D. From the **Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley** in Systematic and Philosophical Theology. She came to St. Edward's University in Austin to join the faculty as Assistant Professor of Religious and Theological Studies. Complementing this work, she has a call to work part time with student

ministry there as a United Church of Christ minister. We are so pleased she is among us and look forward to having her as a minister in the Brazos Association.

It is a privilege to work with our in care/in discernment students and a joy to see them become ordained. This is one of the best parts of my work among you!

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash

Pastor Rev. Robin Meyers in Austin and Temple

UCC pastor and author **Rev. Dr. Robin Meyers** will be speaking at **St. Martin's Lutheran Church**, 606 W 15th St., on Thursday, **September 27**. A reception will begin at 7:00 pm, and he'll speak at 7:30 pm. Meyers is the author of *Saving Jesus from the Church* and *The Underground Church*. He'll also be speaking and leading workshops at Connections Live! 2012 in Temple Texas on September 28-29. The focus of this event is to help "progressive" Christians from Central Texas reflect on their Christian faith and make contacts with one another. The event costs \$75, the hotel costs \$89, and registration must be in by September 5. If you'd like to attend, see Tom for registration details.