

# THE VISITOR

September 2017

**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**



Ain't no mercy on the streets of this town  
Ain't no bread from heavenly skies  
Ain't nobody drawin' wine from this blood

In a world without pity  
Do you think what I'm askin's too much  
I just want something to hold on to  
And a little of that human touch  
Just a little of that human touch

Bruce Springsteen

**J**ust a little of that human touch. It might be the literal touch of skin. Jesus touched the hand of Peter's mother-in-law and he touched the untouchable leper. The skin of one touching the skin of another can be very powerful in lots of different ways and for lots of different reasons. Humans need that touch.

But that human touch can also be something other than human bodies touching or embracing. It can be any number of human acts, big or small, that touch another person's life in some way. Something that someone finds touching or moving: "Wow, I found it very touching, very moving, when you did that for me." It can be whatever touches another person's heart or soul. The act of love, kindness, compassion or wisdom. The helpful response to a need or to a request for help.

And leave it to The Boss to incorporate a Eucharistic theme into his longing for that human touch. There's no bread falling from heaven and blood ain't holy wine. But what will save me is a little of that human touch.

I think that's one aspect of Holy Communion. We live in *holy union with* one another by touching one another's lives with that human touch. A Christ-like human touch. And not just one another's lives, but other people's as well. The touch of love, kindness, compassion and wisdom. The liberating, healing and reconciling touch.

Jacob Nordby writes in his book, *Blessed are the Weird*, "I can't change the world or solve its problems. That's too much. Too big. But I can turn and honestly face my own problems, fears, and pain. I can learn

to love and serve those who are within my own arm's reach." Nordby calls us, "the fingertips of 'God' touching the earth."

Obviously, when responding to other people's needs, we need not limit ourselves to the reach of our own arm. Modern technology enables us to extend our reach all around the globe. We can touch the world and make an impact on people's lives almost anywhere. Right now, people in Houston and the Gulf Coast need our help. "Dreamers" all across Texas and the United States need our help. There are many ways for us to touch the earth in Christ-like ways beyond the reach of our arm.

But I invite you to pay close attention to how you live with the people who are more or less within arm's reach of your life. The people you actually see and with whom you interact, whether its family members, friends, work associates, people at the grocery store, the homeless people on the street, the drivers in the next lane on MOPAC, the Trump supporter across the street, the Muslim worshiping down the street. As you interact with other people, whether it's with words, just a glance, or an actual touch of skin, see if you can offer them a little bit of that human touch. That Christ-like human touch.

## Hurricane Harvey Response

(Speaking of that Christ-like human touch . . .)



**Barbara Burnham** is coordinating the church's continuing outreach to the survivors of Hurricane Harvey and thanks our church members for their whole-hearted support.

After church on Sept. 10, we all signed up to bring the various supplies (brushes, sponges, cleansers/bleach, spray bottles, gloves, trash bags, etc.) needed to assemble 12 cleaning kits/buckets after church Sept. 17, which we will then deliver to Austin Disaster Relief Network (ADRN). Also to be included in each bucket: a short encouraging handwritten message to each recipient of the buckets. Prior to Sept 10, church members had already put together welcome kits (pillows, blankets, toiletries, etc.) for survivors/evacuees, and delivered these and numerous other

**9/3/17** A week after the onset of Hurricane Harvey, Jaime Hadley, Abby Lundgren, Bryan Rutherford, and Sara Ross putting together care packages for evacuees after church

donated items to the ADRN receiving dock at the **Hope Family Thrift Store, 1122 E. 51st St., Austin 78723.** Items may still be taken to this location.

SOME USEFUL WEBSITES to consult for further information:

The Austin Disaster Relief Network, which takes donations and volunteer workers: <https://adrn.org/>

How to build welcome/clean-up survivor kits: <https://adrn.org/disaster-relief/survivordonationkits/>

The UCC website ( [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org) ) for folks who would like to go online to see their information/donate.)

## Personals

by Pat Oakes

It was great to see Tom back in the pulpit on Sunday, Sept. 3, after a relaxing, educational, and refreshing sabbatical this summer. During children's time he enjoyed exchanging experiences with them about their summer fun. Everyone had a chance to welcome him back after the service at coffee hour.



9/3/17 We welcomed Tom back from his sabbatical the first Sunday in September

We all missed Tom while he was on sabbatical, but we thoroughly enjoyed getting acquainted with Amelia Fulbright, the interim for the summer. Most of us who attend regularly have seen/met her off and on over the past year or two as she would come to services in her capacity as the director of the Labyrinth Student Ministry program. She brought wonderful thought-provoking new perspectives to us, especially as she spoke of her early childhood in Zambia. She spent her first 6 years in Zambia as her father was a Baptist missionary there. We also enjoyed getting to know her husband Jonathan Zer-

cher and their almost 3-year-old daughter Vivienne. Thank you, Amelia, for a job well-done!



8/13/17 Farewell to Amelia Fulbright, interim for Tom VandeStadt for the summer—Amelia multi-tasking—cutting the cake and holding daughter Vivienne

Are you an enthusiast of mini-golf, or BBQ, or justice? If you answered "yes" to at least two of those, then we hope you will join other members of the CCoA in supporting and participating in the Equal Justice Center's fall fundraiser at Austin's iconic Peter Pan Mini-Golf on Thurs, Sept 28. Each year a spirited delegation of Church members attends the event to enjoy barbecue—traditionally Franklin's, but because of a recent fire there, folk will be enjoying highly recommended delicious barbecue from Micklethwait's Craft Meats, locovore West African vegetarian curry, local micro-brew, mini-golf fun, and support for justice for low wage working families. The event is especially fun for kids who'll be able to meet Peter Pan, Captain Hook, and Tinkerbell. In addition, each year the Congregational Church traditionally sponsors one hole on the mini-golf course by pooling together member contributions—large and small. If you'd like to join our church's support for the work of the Equal Justice Center, you can give your check (made out to "Equal

## Heart of Texas Association News

September

by Liz Nash

The UCC Southern Regional Women's Retreat is coming to our Conference, close to many of us at a lovely location (from everything I have heard for years)—Mo Ranch, the Presbyterian conference center in Kerrville, <https://www.moranch.org/>. The retreat will be held Friday, October 20th - Sunday, October 22nd. The theme is “Joyful Expectations, Peaceful Inspiration,” with opportunities for morning worship, watch devotions, vesper service, workshops with many creative and inspiring themes, a service project, a silent auction, an opportunity to share pictures of your church's women, and “communion with the breath-taking view of the Hill Country.” It is an opportunity, too, for UCC women to gather from Texas to North Carolina, Virginia, and Florida. Several women from the Heart of Texas Association are part of the planning team, leading worship, and leading workshops. Registration is \$200 for double-occupancy before Sept. 5th, \$210 after Sept. 1. (Deadline to register is Sept. 15), \$325 for single occupancy, and \$85 if you don't need lodging. As of the third week in August, registration is half full, with a 100 person limit. You can register online and find contact information at <https://srwr.secucc.org/>. I hope many of us can enjoy this wonderful time together!

Our Fall Heart of Texas Association meeting date has been set on Saturday, November 4th. One of our Austin churches will host, as we are beginning our new rotation of meetings in the different clusters of the Association, with Austin hosting in the fall. The Austin group is still deciding on the host church. The process is a little different than in the past, with cluster churches working out the “when, where, and how” together, so we are in the process of starting to work together. The word will go out to all of our Association churches when we have more details, but plan to join together in Austin on Nov. 4th.

Two of our Association clergy have been speakers at rallies in Austin recently. Dan DeLeon, senior pastor

of Friends Congregational, spoke on the Capitol steps on August 1st at a religious leaders' gathering organized by Texas Impact in opposition to SB 3, the transgender “bathroom bill,” and similar measures. John Gage, senior pastor of United Christian, spoke at the Austin City Hall rally against white supremacy on August 19th in response to the Charlottesville white nationalist violence and killing. A number of our UCC clergy and laypeople have spent hours at the Capitol to testify, lobby, and attend rallies this past spring and summer. All of these are continuing the longtime UCC tradition of participation in public and political life, moved by faith and conscience.

Blessings in Christ,  
Liz Nash, Heart of Texas Association Minister

### Church Leadership

Trustee Chair	Don Brown
Deacons Chair	Betty Bodman
Outreach Team	Whit Bodman
Moderator	John Goff
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Pam Tucker
Christian Education	Rachel Dietz, Lynne Lemley
Youth Sunday School	
Coordinator	John Burlinson
Clerk	Jaime Hadley
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Webmistresses:	Shannon Quisenberry, Sara Ross
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

## Personals (continued)

by Pat Oakes

Justice Center") or other donation directly to Bill Beardall who will apply it toward the CCoA sponsorship. Or if you prefer you can write a check to Congregational Church of Austin (with a memo note that it is for the Equal Justice Center) and the Church will apply it toward our sponsorship. Donations to the Church's sponsorship includes admission for you and your family to the Sept 28 event.

Twenty-eight hardy souls made it to church on Sunday, the 27th of August—Hurricane Harvey Sunday. A huge limb or two had come down in the street—fortunately neither the building nor any cars



8/27 2017 The congregation was greeted by several inches of rain and fallen branches after Hurricane Harvey's visit to Austin

were damaged.

Sarah Darter was supposed to lead the service, but because of high water and wind moving through the Austin area—and living miles from the church—she asked Whit Bodman to fill in. The Visioning Committee was supposed to make a presentation, but that will be rescheduled for September. Jonathan Geer had a small group to enjoy his worship gift which was a moving vocal rendition of “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen” with Tony Rogers as the 2nd vocal.

Barbara Burnham and her family—Robin, Samantha, and Rebecca Rosson and Julia Ross—

recently spent a long weekend in Dallas. Rob and Julia went to see a favorite band, Primus, and Barbara went to mind the children. But they made a little vacation of it, first stopping in Ft. Worth to view the exhibit of nineteenth century paintings at the Kimbell Museum.



8/2017 Samantha Rosson atop a Galapagos turtle at the Dallas Zoo

In Dallas, they spent the better part of a day at the Dallas Zoo, where Samantha was thrilled to see several live cheetahs, her favorite animal. The Zoo had a "cheetah encounter" in the morning, which included the cheetah racing by in a blur (preceded by a small flock of guinea hens and then a black Labrador retriever, who had been raised with the cheetah as a brother). The trainers then led the cheetah, on a leash, up and down the wire fence, so that he could be seen clearly by the enthralled visitors. Later Sammy and her sister and parents saw more cheetahs in the Wild Africa section. Barbara by that time had found a bench in front of the mandrill exhibit and waited for them to return. They all ate at some lovely restaurants that accommodated both the vegan and gluten-free contingents. Although Rebecca was not particularly fond of long-distance rides in the car, they enjoyed their adventures and were glad to get out of town for

a short time.

Warinda Harris and her family—husband John, sons Alden and William, and her mom Barbara Johnson (who is finally home, doing well, and making progress after a year of hospitals and rehab after a stroke) had their household increased by 5 during Hurricane Harvey. Warinda's aunt, cousin and her husband and two daughters drove in from Houston. There are still a number of family members in the Houston area and in Louisiana who are safe and sound but they have suffered damage to their homes. Warinda's dad, who works for the VA in Houston, stayed at work with one other employee who was trying to keep things safe upstairs from Friday until Tuesday in the basement struggling to keep the computers going as the basement filled with filthy water and sewage. We will have an update next month.

Richard Jackson and Mary Sinclair are in Germany (from Heidelberg, Canada) for a vacation with their German friends this month, meeting in Zurich and then heading north to Bodensee, the Mosel and on to Hamburg for a big birthday party for their friend's 60<sup>th</sup> in their old hunting lodge that is now a fancy wild-meat restaurant on the north side of Hamburg.

6/18/17 Laura Hubbs-Tait with her mom Cathy Hubbs at coffee hour--and no, they did not color-coordinate on purpose!



It was old home week at church for Stephen Russell and Derrick Evans on a recent Sunday. Stephen Russell, now on the faculty at UT, and Derrick Evans, now a United Airlines pilot, enjoyed catching up on a bunch of years as they remembered good times at Slumber Falls church camp in the 1980s. They hadn't seen each other since then, so there was a lot to talk about! Derrick has not been to church much recently since his flying schedule has kept him on the



8/20/16 Stephen Russell, Pat Oakes, and Derrick Evans

go, but he hopes to be back again soon.

Shaela and Bryan Rutherford are pleased to report that their 3-year-old daughter Ena is doing very well after surgery in late August to do some repair work on the rattle snakebite area on her lower leg. You may remember she was bitten by two rattlesnakes she stumbled into last summer while visiting the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center with her mom and older sister Naomi. After being picked up by a helicopter, no less, she spent several difficult weeks in the hospital at that time and the most recent surgery was to make things even better. The surgery went quickly and smoothly, and she's home and seems to be feeling quite well. She has to stay off her feet for a week of two, which will be tough for a very independent girl, but she'll get through it. In fact, she was in church on Sunday, the 3<sup>rd</sup>, with a cast on her 6 lower left leg, enjoying being carried around by her folks.

6/18/17 We had a visit from Colin and Eli Ferguson and their darling daughter Soneto. Nodie came over to admire the precious little one



Savanna Tucker went to Minnesota this summer to play in a YCC (Youth Club Championship) tournament for an all girls team called Texas Tango. Savanna tried out for a regional Texas Ultimate team in June. Ultimate is mix between football and freeze tag played with a flying disc like a Frisbee™. Points are scored by passing the disk to a teammate in the opposing end zone. As the disc is worked up the field, players may not take steps while holding the disk. Interceptions, incomplete passes, and out of bounds throws are turnovers. Alison calls the game a cross between football and freeze tag. It's non-contact and they played in the U20 division. The interesting thing is that there are no referees and calls are made by the players. Sportsmanship is paramount and at the end of the match, the players stand in a circle with arms around shoulders, alternating team members, and each team gives several compliments to the other team about how they played and they sometimes give silly awards. The teams from Texas all drove up in a bus from Austin to Blaine, Minnesota, (22 hours straight!). Her team finished 6th (out of 13) in their division. She plays Ultimate for her school, but it is a co-ed team (mostly guys) and sometimes it is difficult to get the guys to play equally with the team's girls. She really liked playing with Tango because they

work together as a team. She plans to try out next year, too. Tango was a completely new and cool experience and she liked it!

### **FROM APQ: the Austin Piazzolla Quintet:**

**Did you hear? We've got a brand new CD!**

Our **4th album** has been out since May and we're thrilled with the way it turned out. It features Piazzolla's Angel and Devil suites as well as 2 new original compositions from our violinist and bandleader, James Anderson.

**Now available digitally on Bandcamp and physically on CDBaby**

### **Back to the Northeast!**

We're happy to report that we'll be back in the New England area in less than a couple weeks to play a short run of shows. Venues and cities are listed below, but you can check out our website for even more detailed info. Please help us get the word out and hopefully we'll see you on the road!

#### **Check out our upcoming shows:**

**September 22nd** - The Lilypad / Boston, MA

**September 23rd** - Meeting House on the Green / East Fairfield, VT

**September 25th** - Café Résonance / Montreal, Quebec

**September 27th** - Pausa Art House / Buffalo, NY

**September 28th** - Barbés / Brooklyn, NY

**September 29th** - Modnaddock Center / Peterborough, NH

**September 30th** - Last Church on the Left / Portland, ME

## October Visitor Deadline—Sept. 30, 2017

### History Corner

by Pat and Mel Oakes



1/7/01 Melanie Wilkinson and Dennis Murphy at Pastor Yoshi-Kaneda's retirement party

Many of you have heard those of us who have been around the church for awhile speak about Melanie Wilkinson or you may have noticed her photo hanging in the Fellowship hall. In fact, Nodie remembered her in prayer time on Sunday, the 3rd, when she noted, referring to Tom's sermon on the power of touch, that Melanie was renown for her fabulous, caring hugs. After services when she sang, congregants lined up for their hug from Melanie!

**Melanie Delia Ruth Wilkinson** was a regular soloist and visitor to the

church. She was a friend and protégée of Nodie and Dennis Murphy. Nodie first met Melanie when choreographing the musical "42nd Street" for the Round Rock High School where Melanie was a senior. Melanie used to tell friends that she fell in love with music when she was 4 years old and heard the sound of children singing in a school choir. She spent the next three decades singing in high school and college, training as an opera singer. She graduated from Huston-Tillotson College with a degree in music education. She earned a master's degree in music from Texas State University. Along the way, she performed for Ann Richards, Lady Bird Johnson and Barbara Jordan, who frequently requested Wilkinson at special events. She starred with Jacqui Cross and Janis Stinson in the Austin Playhouse's production of "Blues in the Night." Melanie was a member of the East Side Church of Christ, where her choral director, Marlon McGhee said, "She had the gift. When she sang, she just held your attention. I would just have to stop and listen sometimes and say, 'Wow, I'm supposed to be directing the group.' " Melanie was born in Detroit, Michigan on January 13, 1972 to Carl and Audrey Mae Batts Wilkinson. She attended school in Round Rock, Texas. In 2009, Melanie was tragically killed in an auto accident several days before she was scheduled to travel to Washington, D.C. to sing with a choral group at the National Cathedral. Melanie was only 37. She was hit by a driver who crossed the center-line. At the time of the accident, Melanie was working as an overnight 911 call-taker at Austin's Combined Transportation, Emergency and Communications Center. She had worked there since 2005.

**Thank you to Ramie Briggs** who recorded this video and to **Dennis Murphy** who gave it to me ages ago. I came across it a month ago and Mel did the research and put it up on the church Web Site. This is the link to hear her glorious voice:

[http://server16.websitehostserver.net/~patandme/CCAHistory/Images-ChurchSite/Church\\_Music\\_and\\_Musicians\\_files/MelanieWilkinson.m4v](http://server16.websitehostserver.net/~patandme/CCAHistory/Images-ChurchSite/Church_Music_and_Musicians_files/MelanieWilkinson.m4v)

There is a lot more church history to explore on the church history Web site. Click on <http://server16.websitehostserver.net/~patandme/CCAHistory/index.html>