

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt

Rev. John Towery, Pastor Emeritus

On one of the trips I made to Honduras some years ago, I bought a crucifix in an artisan market. Depending on how you look at it, the man nailed to the cross is either Jesus Christ dressed as a rural campesino, or a rural campesino with the features we typically attribute to Jesus Christ. Sometimes when I look at it, I see a Honduran campesino nailed to the cross, one who's suffered all the indignities of his class at the hands of those who possess more wealth, power, and status. One who's oppressed, exploited, and poor. A second-class citizen, third-class if he's indigenous, and likely to be imprisoned if he speaks too loudly of liberation, or killed if he actually acts to liberate himself.

Other times, I see Jesus Christ nailed to the cross. He too hailed from a class that suffered at the hands of those with more wealth, power, and status. He rubbed shoulders with sinners and outcasts, the oppressed, exploited, and poor, second and third-class citizens. He lived under the thumb of an empire that imprisoned those who spoke of liberation, and killed those who acted to liberate themselves.



Then there are times I can see Jesus Christ and the campesino merge as one single identity. Jesus Christ is suffering *as* the campesino. This is powerful because if we have faith that a deep, intimate, and inseparable relationship exists between Jesus Christ and God, it means God is suffering as well. Through Jesus Christ suffering *as* the campesino, the campesino's suffering makes God suffer.

By implication, this means the people who're responsible for inflicting suffering on the campesino are inflicting it on Jesus Christ and God as well. Those who're making the campesino work without wages, imposing hunger and sub-standard housing on his family, beating him when he complains and killing him when he acts to liberate himself, are inflicting suffering on Jesus Christ and God. In other words, oppress and exploit the campesino, impover-

ish his family, beat him or kill him, and you commit an offense against God. So be careful how you treat the campesino, because how you treat the campesino is how you treat God.

Jesus once took a child in his arms and said, "whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and not me, but the One who sent me." And in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus talked of the Son of man in heaven saying to the righteous, "I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me...the truth is this, when you did this to one of the least of my sisters or brothers, you did it to me."

In the first instance, Jesus identified himself as a child. The one low down on the totem pole of status. The one who's supposed to be seen but not heard, and often times, not even seen. The one who's expected to obey and serve everyone, and often gets the most onerous chores. The one most vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. That's me, Jesus said. That's *me*. So be careful how you treat a child. How you treat a child is how you treat me. And not me, but the One who sent me.

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me. So be careful how you treat a child. How you treat a child is how you treat me. And not me, but the One who sent me.

In the second instance, Jesus identified himself as the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned, and he said, I'm every person who's *that* person. So be careful how you treat the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned. Offer that person food and drink, or welcome, visit, and clothe that person, and you end my suffering. But turn your back on that person, or look upon that person with scorn, and you make my suffering worse.

I read these gospel lessons and look at the Honduran crucifix in similar ways. To me, they signify that Jesus Christ not only models how we're to treat people who suffer the indignity of their class, who're oppressed, exploited, and impoverished, second and third-class citizens, children or hungry and thirsty, he takes a radical step further. He identifies himself *as* those people. As every person who suffers or is vulnerable to suffering. And he tells his followers, be careful how you treat such people. How you treat them is how you treat me. And not only me, God.

On a deeper level, they open my heart and mind to how deeply God is woven into the fabric of human life. And how inseparable are the acts of loving God and loving our neighbor. In our minds, we can probably separate the two and make a theological distinction between loving God and loving our neighbor. But Jesus Christ taught that the two are not separate. God is not separate from our neighbor. God is intimately present within us, our neighbor, and the matrix of all our relationships. How we love our neighbor is how we love God. And how we don't is how we don't.

So be careful. Treat with utmost care your every interaction with every person. For how you treat that person is how you treat Jesus Christ. And not Jesus Christ, God.

TOM

iACT A Night Under One Sky
Tuesday, October 9
6:30—9:30 pm

This special event has become a beloved tradition in our community. It celebrates the notion that there is common ground we can all walk in search of peace and respect in this world. *Please join us and support iACT's vital service programs, serving our most vulnerable neighbors, through our 2012 fall fundraiser.* This year **A Night Under One Sky** will feature a special guest: Rev. Dr. Wes Magruder, senior associate pastor at First Rowlett United Methodist Church in Rowlett, Texas.

Rev. Magruder recently attracted international attention when he decided to join his friend, Imam Yaseen Shaikh of Plano, in observing the Ramadan fast. He wrote about the experience on his personal blog, offering insights into the practice of fasting and how his interaction with his Muslim friends deepened his Christian faith.



Pam Tucker, Dave Ross, Ranae Beeker, and Florence Castle visiting at the Sunday school Hawaiian luau kickoff.

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

Personals by Pat Oakes

Nodie Murphy and her husband **Dennis** have had a very busy summer! On May 27th, their youngest son **Ned**, now in the Army and going by "Benjamin," got married to **Faye Sager**. (Some of you may have met her at the Oakes' Christmas Open House last year.) The ceremony took place at the **Lutsen Resort** on the north shore of **Lake Superior**. Their other son, **Seth**, was an excellent Best Man, grandson **Randy** was an usher, and grandson Ryan was a ring bearer. The entire Murphy clan was present and experienced rain and cool temperatures to their great relief. Ned (Ben) and Faye now reside in upstate New York at **Fort Drum**, where Ned is awaiting deployment.



Ned and Faye's wedding party in May--you can see Faye and Ned with Seth as best man and Dennis doing a reading.



Nodie and Dennis's grandson, Randy Sennour, made a fine usher at the wedding.

From June 21st to 26th, **Nodie** attended the **UCC Musicians' Network Convention in Kansas City**, where she learned many things that re-enforced her enthusiasm for the music program in our small church. She also met a young singer/songwriter there from New Braunfels whom she hopes to invite to Austin for a concert in January. While there she had dinner with **Fred and Carol Scott**, who miss the folks at church in Austin very much. In early July Dennis and Nodie drove to **Conway Springs, Kansas**, to prepare a Fourth of July picnic for her aunt and uncle who used to prepare Fourth celebrations for her. Later in the month, Nodie flew to New Orleans to participate in another celebration--her mother's ninety-first birthday. From there she flew to San Antonio to attend the Texas Choral Directors' Association's convention, where she greatly enjoyed presentations by **Craig Hella Johnson**, the director of the Conspirare choir and performances by wonderful musical artists. Nodie and Dennis had two more trips scheduled in August and early September, but Dennis' bout with what they think was West Nile virus led to the cancellation of those two visits. All that was left was Nodie's cataract surgery, which went well, so everything's looking rosy right now. The happy couple will be glad to answer any questions or provide details regarding these adventures upon request.



Faye's mother Wendy, Ben (whom we know as Ned) and Faye Murphy ,at their wedding in May.

The Sunday school kickoff was a big hit on Sunday, August 26th. New Sunday School teacher **Anna Kimberley** went all out with a Hawaiian luau theme which everyone enjoyed. New child caregiver Thaisa (Tye) Howorth is doing a great job and is enjoying getting to know the younger set at church .

Our former Sunday school teacher **Robynne Heymans** who left us in May for the Big Apple sent the following. "I got a part time position working for a high-profile family so I'm rubbing elbows with political consultants and movie



Evan Lippert, Julianne Lippert (hidden behind Pegasus) and Caleb Parkhill having a great time with our new child caregiver Thaisa Howorth on 9/16/12



Robynne Heymans is having a fabulous time in NYC and Anna Kimberley is doing a fabulous job with our Sunday School program. (Photo taken in May)

stars every day. The family is amazing and the kids are such a pleasure to be with. I'm also interning for a non-profit called **East New York** farms. They bring healthy, organic and culturally relevant produce to socioeconomically disadvantaged and ethnically diverse areas of Brooklyn through a system of urban farms and markets. I run a children's garden in one of their community gardens. I perform general maintenance as well as spearhead efforts to get community schools more involved and eventually hand the entire project over to the community members. It's great work and I'm excited to be part of a great organization. It ALMOST fills the space in my heart created when I left UCC. Almost. I live in a sublet apartment in a quiet Polish neighborhood in Northeast Brooklyn. I have a little backyard and a few roommates. I move into something more permanent in November. I ride a bike and take the subway to get around. There are a lot of amazing restaurants all around me, and the bagels are delicious, but there is a serious lack of queso anywhere. The city itself is unlike any place I've ever been. It's always teeming with life, pulsing and breathing and moving. I discover something new here every day. I've met many amazing friends

as well as had a great time living in the same city as Emily again. It is hard to be away from home and the community I had in Austin, but I'm so thankful to be having this incredible experience in New York." We are so glad you are doing well, Robynne!!

Barbara Burnham is enjoying her new home in South Austin. Her new address is: 10221 Brantley Bend, 78748, and her new phone number is 809-2966.

At this writing **Cathy Hubbs** is looking forward to celebrating her 90th birthday at church on Sunday, October 7th, with many family members in town for the occasion. We will have photos and more of a story next month, but it is not too late to send Cathy good birthday wishes at her new address: 4100 Jackson Ave. Apt. 236, Austin 78731.

Another amazing birthday is coming on Oct. 4th. Longtime choir director **Marie Scheel** will be celebrating her 98th birthday with her niece Ann who is coming to visit from Southfield, Michigan. Another niece Lois came to visit from Southfield in July. Marie is still living on her own, has wonderful neighbors who look out for her, and despite finding it harder and harder to see well, gets around her home just fine. You can send a card to Marie at 1908 Oak Hill Lane, Austin 78744-6710. Happy birthday, Marie!!

Greg and Margaret Futch had a great time with Margaret's family in August in Winter Park, Colorado, at her family reunion. Margaret had many members of her family there —3 brothers, 3 sisters, and many in-laws! It was a joy for them to have the family meet their grandson, Alexander, who was there with his parents. Greg reports that **Matt, Cyndi, and Alexander** are doing well, that the whole family was happy to be there and got along fine—and the weather in Colorado was wonderful.



Greg Futch's son, Matt, wife Cyndi and their adorable son, Alexander in Winter Park, Colorado in August.

Kristen and Jason Parkhill report that everything's going well and that they just getting back into the swing of things now that school has started. They were gone all of August, retreating from the heat to Michigan, where Kristen's family lives. They also moved into a new house rental near the airport and **McKinney Falls State Park**. Her mom is a nurse who enjoys taking temporary assignments in different places and is especially pleased when she can be located near her adorable grandchildren. She got a nursing assignment in Houston, so the Parkhills went to Houston on September 9th to help her get settled in to her new apartment. Eager helpers were **Caleb**, who turned 5 in mid-September and **Zooney**, who is 6 months old. It was great to have them back at church on the 16th.

With **Isabella, Francesca and John** back in school, **Rachel Dietz** is spending more time these days on **Junebeam**, her handmade clothing and accessories business. Her children's clothing is currently featured in three local stores: **Gaga** on South Lamar, **A-Town** on Burnet Road, and **Dolce Baby** in West Lake Hills. She is excited to report that **Junebeam** will have a booth at **Holiday Collectibles**, a shopping bazaar and fundraiser put on by **West Lake Hills Presbyterian Preschool**. Look for her selling her handmade clothing and pillows on November 1, 2 and 3rd. For more information, visit: http://holidaycollectibles.org/Holiday_Collectibles2012/. Stay tuned for info on the grand opening of her online store. It is a joy to be able to nurture her business AND be home with the kids after school!

The church family was saddened to hear of the passing of **Beth Gleason's** dear friend **Joyce Smith**, Attorney-at-law



Joyce Smith

for the **Texas Juvenile Justice** system. Joyce had been ill off and on for a year with no definitive diagnosis of what was causing her such trouble. In early September she took a sudden turn for the worse and died at the young age of 56. Although

she was a specialist in contract law she was most proud of her achievements on behalf of Texas' children, which included service as a foster parent and as a child advocate for **CASA**. She taught high school history for ten years in east Texas. She coached the high school women's basketball team on to a state championship during that time. She also acquired a MA in Texas history from the University of **Southern Mississippi** before going on to law school at **Thurgood Marshall School of Law** at **Texas Southern** in Houston. Joyce often attended services with us and was a regular at the Oakes' open house at Christmas. She will be sorely missed by her many friends who loved her generosity, kindness and sense of humor.

Don Miles has visited Mexico every year for more than 50 years. His latest book is about a young woman who learns that her family's stagecoach business is the cover for a large network of spies and guerillas opposing the French takeover of Mexico. **Paloma Vargas** joins the guerilla forces, and soon discovers that she is the prey for the French contre-guérillas who want her captured or killed. The book **Cinco de Mayo the Novel** is due out on September 27th in hardcover, paperback and E-book formats.



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

Brazos Association News

October

by Liz Nash

All are invited to join us at the **Brazos Association Fall Meeting on Saturday morning, October 13th at Weimar UCC, from 10 am through lunch time.** This will be an opportunity to learn about the exciting work being done at **Back Bay Mission**, work which changed in scope and kind to address the great needs after **Hurricane Katrina** struck Biloxi in 2005. Current Back Bay board member **Anne Wehrly** will lead this program. We will be deciding on whether to sponsor a work camp trip for our Association churches in 2014. We will also be honoring Pastor and friend **John Boyston of Lyons Evangelical UCC** for his service as John prepares to retire from active ministry later this fall. We hope you will plan to join us for the hospitality of the **Weimar church.**

This month, I invite the members of our churches to consider being part of what many in our Brazos Association churches have found to be an incredibly enriching discipleship weekend. We are blessed to have two ways of doing this: the Journey and the **Walk to Emmaus**. Both are Christian renewal weekends that provide a short course in Christian faith and discipleship within a community supported by prayer, worship, and the gifts and work of many who are been an ongoing part of these communities. Both are ecumenical retreats and movements that have their roots in **Cursillo**, a Roman Catholic church renewal and discipleship movement that spread beyond Catholicism into the Episcopal and Protestant churches. Though there are differing names for the retreats and the communities of ongoing support, these groups are not competing but reach out to each other in prayer throughout the world. The weekend is meant for church people to grow in discipleship by inspiring, developing, and equipping active local church members for faithful life and Christian action. They are, in short, an opportunity to renew, strengthen, and rekindle faith.

The **Journey** community has been chiefly rooted in UCC churches, with significant leadership by members of **Friends Congregational in College Station** and **Cathedral of Hope** in Dallas along with participants and leaders from other churches as the Journey movement has grown. Men and women pilgrims attend retreats together, and the weekend has the Open and Affirming commitment of many of our UCC churches. The next Journey retreat will be sponsored by our Brazos Valley community at the **Crossroads Retreat Center in Caldwell** on January 10-13, 2013, beginning at 5:30 on Thursday afternoon and ending at approximately 3:30 pm on Sunday. The cost is \$140 for registrations before **December 1st** and \$150 for registrations received in December. **Dan DeLeon**, pastor 6

of Friends Congregational Church, will be the spiritual leader and a number of Brazos Association church members are part of the leadership. If you want to join us or receive more information, contact TheJourneyUCC@gmail.com or send me a message at lizknash@gmail.com. I can also give information about the next scheduled Journey retreat, March 17-20th, 2013, which will be held at a site closer to the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

The Emmaus Walks are connected with The Upper Room ministries. There are a number of Emmaus walk sites and communities in Texas. Men and women pilgrims attend separate retreats. Although other Emmaus communities that border our Brazos Association, one that many of our members are part of is the Brazos Valley Emmaus Community. They are sponsoring a **Women's Emmaus Walk** at the **Crossroads Retreat Center** on Thursday, October 18 through Sunday, October 21. The cost is **\$125**. You can register for this and later Brazos Valley Emmaus Walks at <http://www.bvemmas.org/index.html>. Many of our licensed ministers and pastors have attended Emmaus Walks and would be great resources to find out more information. I can help connect you with our friends in the Association who are part of an Emmaus community.

I encourage you to consider whether you are feeling called to a renewing faith experience at a Journey or Emmaus Walk weekend.

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash
Brazos Association Minister

Annual Homeless Fair November 17

In an average year, about 600-700 homeless people attend the **Annual Homeless Fair** to take advantage of free food, medical services provided through UT School of Nursing, free haircuts, showers, etc. While the real purpose of the Fair is to put homeless people together with social service agencies who might help them change their situations in the longer term, in fact the Fair makes these people's lives a little better by providing clothing, backpacks, and blankets through the cold months.

If you would like to make a small donation you can go to the website of Austin's umbrella agency for dealing with homeless issues (the agency is known as ECHO). The website is here: <http://www.austinecho.org/HRF> Contact jlawyer@grandecom.net for more information.

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Lucy Hanouille wants you to know that on Saturday, **November 3rd, Tapestry Singers Austin Women's Choir** will present their 25th Anniversary Concert, **Taking Root: Celebrating 25 Years of Singing Together** will be presented at 7:30 PM at **St. Matthew's Episcopal Church**. Tickets will soon be available online at <http://www.tapestrysingers.org/concerts/buy-tickets/>

We've missed seeing **Michelle and Rhys Ulerich**. They report that they were traveling over the summer and have been very busy with work. Son **Ozark** is doing very well. He will be 2 years old on Christmas and he is talking, running, climbing, and learning so much every day.

Elizabeth Freese and Talley Summerlin are doing well in New Jersey. **Rose and Vivian** are now in 5th and 3rd grade at **Torey J. Sabatini** elementary school in **Madison**, and are loving it. They will continue with karate lessons this fall (they are yellow belts). Vivian will also be playing basketball at the YMCA while Rose practices yoga. They recently organized a "circus" on the **Drew University** campus with other campus kids. Their performances earned enough money in their tip jar to buy some "ghost hunting" equipment their gang wanted (Drew is one of the most haunted college campuses in the United States). Elizabeth is in her second year of course work now and back to living in the library. She is also serving on a campus sustainability committee as well as taking on a leadership role in a department colloquium. As part of her work-study commitments she also continues to support the **Green Seminary Initiative**. She has become very adept at reading lots of books very quickly. **Talley** continues to commute into NYC each day for work where there is never a dull moment. He is documenting his work travels on a Pinterest board so you can see part of what he sees each day in the Big Apple (<http://pinterest.com/talleysummerlin>). His new EP, *Shake the Gates*, is slowly spreading and continues to get positive feedback from podcasters and fans. Talley is also part of **Stanley Congregational Church's** "vision committee" - a group overhauling the vision, mission, goals and outreach of this Chatham, New Jersey institution. (Editorial note—do check out the Pinterest site —lots of fun and great photos!)



Sunday school Hawaiian luau kickoff: Juliet Quisenberry, Cathy Hubbs, Betty Bodman, and Reuel Nash, Rachel Dietz, Kevin Dietz, and Jason Quisenberry.



Juliet and Scarlett Quisenberry enjoying the Sunday school Hawaiian luau kickoff on Aug. 26th, 2012.



Harrison and Savannah Tucker playing foosball with John Dietz at the Sunday school kick-off breakfast.

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

Return Service Requested

Deadline for November Visitor — Oct. 21

October Calendar

On Thursday, October 4, the **Equal Justice Center** will host its fall **fundraiser golf tournament** at Peter Pan mini-golf on S. Lamar from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. See Bill Beardall for tickets, or Whit Bodman to join others in sponsoring a hole.

Tom will host a **book discussion** of Robin Meyers' most recent book, *The Underground Church*, on **Sunday, October 7**, following worship. If you would like participate in the discussion, please pick up a copy of the book and read it by October 7, and if possible, attend his speaking engagement (see note below). If we decide we need to extend our discussion beyond October 7, we can do so.

The Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty will host "**Faithful Considerations: A Discussion with Sr. Helen Prejean and Austin Faith Leaders**," on **Friday, October 12**, at St. Edwards University Ragsdale Center, at 7:00 pm. **Sister Helen Prejean**, author of *Dead Man Walking*, will discuss the death penalty with Rev. John Elford of University United Methodist Church and Rev. Nestor of Menivar of Principe de Paz Baptist Church. **The Congregational Church of Austin, UCC, is a co-sponsor of this event.** Travis County has sentenced more people to death than 250 other counties in Texas, and it ranks third, along with Tarrant County, in new death sentences since 2007. If you'd like to attend, **you must RSVP** to receive free tickets at <http://tcadp.org/what-we-do/religious-outreach/> and click under "coming events."

University Christian Church will host a dialogue called "**Two Christian Visions for America**" on Sunday, October 21, at 1:30 pm. Two prominent Christian theologians, **Dr. Richard Land** and **Dr. Gary Dorrien**, will offer two visions for America from different Christian perspectives. Dr. Land has served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission since 1988. Dr. Dorrien is the Rienhold Niebuhr Professor of Social Ethics at Union Theological Seminary and Professor of Religion at Columbia University. **The Congregational Church of Austin, UCC, is a co-sponsor of this event.**

Best-selling Author Brian McLaren Coming to Austin with U.S. Book Tour October 11th

Downtown Churches Unite Together for Multi-Faith Event - When four religious leaders walk across the road, it's not the beginning of a joke. It's the start of one of the most important conversations in today's world. **Brian McLaren**, best-selling author, activist, and public theologian, will make a stop in his book tour **Thursday, October 11th at 7 pm at First Baptist Church** of Austin, at Ninth and Trinity in downtown Austin, to lead that exact conversation. In the spirit of interfaith unity, downtown churches including **St. David's Episcopal Church, First Baptist Church of Austin, St. Martin's Lutheran Church, First United Methodist Church, and Central Presbyterian Church** have united together to sponsor this special one-time only event.