

THE VISITOR

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The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt

It is not about race, Donald Trump said. The controversy over taking a knee during the national anthem, it's not about race.

Even though those who are taking a knee repeatedly say, it *is* about race—it's about racism, racial inequality, and police violence against African Americans—Donald Trump said, it's not about race.

Herein lays an interesting dynamic—the power to define what taking a knee is about. The African Americans taking a knee say, it's about race. The white man living in the White House says, it's not about race.

Who has the power to define what taking a knee is about? The African Americans, for whom this is a way to express, in a non-violent and public manner, their legitimate grievance against racism? Or the white man, who says African Americans are only disrespecting his flag and nation, a nation where the white race has historically been, and currently is, dominant over African Americans?

Who has the power to define the meaning of taking a knee?

The power to define gets to the very heart of the reality of race and power in the United States of America.

The power to define reality. Reality is what we say it is, not what they say it is.

The power to define who we and our people are, and the power to define who they and their people are. We are this, but they are that.

The power to define the past. This is what happened in the past, and this is how it happened. This is what we will remember. This is what we will teach. This is what we will celebrate. This is the history that matters. These are the people who mattered. And this is what and who we will discount or forget.

And the power to define the present and the future. This is what's happening now, and this is how things will be.

The power to define is so important because it is so powerful. The power to define gives you power to maintain your dominance over others. Or conversely, the power to define gives you power to free yourself from the dominance others have over you. Those with more power don't want those with less power to gain or exercise the power to define.

Who has the power to define the meaning of taking a knee?

It's not about race, Donald Trump said. He was partly right. But only in the sense that it's not just about race. It's about race and power. For when Donald Trump wields the power to define taking a knee by saying, it's not about race, while the African Americans taking a knee say, it *is* about race, Trump is himself combining race and power in a manner that's intended to dominate, which is the very definition of racism. It's the white man who will define what African Americans are doing, because it's in the white man's power.

And here's how the white man is defining what African Americans are doing: African Americans are disrespecting his nation's flag.

It wasn't all that long ago that a white man could accuse an African American man of disrespecting a white woman, just by the way he looked at her or didn't tip his hat. And the white man could strip and lynch the African American man. Now a white man is accusing African American men of disrespecting his flag, just by taking a knee, and telling team owners to strip them of their employment.

Race and power.

Race and power is just one of our nation's enduring struggles.

Class and power is another.

Gender and power.

Sexual orientation and power.

In this country, white people, rich people, men, and straight people have been the dominant ones. They've been the ones who've held most of the power, who've done most of the defining, who've benefitted the most, and who continue to benefit the most.

People of color, poor people, women, and people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer have long struggled in this country for freedom, equality and justice. They struggle to this day for the power to define who they are, and for the power to define why they are struggling.

May those who struggle for equality and justice prevail.

Tom

Summer 2017 Worship Gifts:

It is always delightful to receive the worship gifts of our members and friends. They enrich our service and help us know one another a little bit better.

In June, before he moved away, **Greg Futch** shared more poetry with us. **Sara Ross** reminded us that our long-time member, the late "**Dutch**" **Scheel** had started the Silver Strings group that still gives concerts in retirement homes and other venues; then she and the trio played a rousing Scott Joplin piece. **Lucy Erda** brought us a meditation aid and led us in a moment of peace.

Joy Penticuff blew us away with her recitation of a poem by Langston Hughes in July. **Mel Oakes** followed her with another well-researched presentation regarding the history of our stained glass windows. Next **Bill Beardall** got everyone "seeing the light" and singing to his energetic music. The last Sunday of the month, **Ruth Koenig** presented a prayer by Thomas Merton, preceded by an introduction to his faith journey.

Our first gift in August was from **Megan Goff**, who showed us her path in pursuing visual art as her self-

expression. Next **Stephen Russell**, who attended our church as a youngster, shared memories of what it was like growing up in this church and how it felt returning "home." The month ended with **Jonathan Geer** and **Tony Rogers** singing and playing "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen" to a reduced congregation due to Hurricane Harvey (how timely!).

Chester Rosson, a member who visits us periodically from Crockett, graced us with a solo in September, reminding us how much we miss him in the choir. Then **Beth Placek** shared her passion for movement by embodying the words of a hymn as the choir sang.

Although it was not an "official" worship gift, **Amy Harris** blessed us twice with her rendition of "Are You Alright?" (aided by the other trio members) and inspired us all to sing along in a communal interrogation.

All these lovely gifts helped to knit us together more tightly as a congregation and made our summer services even more interesting and beneficial. We extend our thanks to all of you who planned, rehearsed and revealed these special gifts to us.

From Nodie Murphy

Personals
by Pat Oakes

The Civil Air Patrol is a volunteer reserve that supports the United States Air Force and engages in disaster relief, search-and-rescue missions and aerospace education. Members range from youthful cadets to service-minded veterans. Our own **Van Herd (Major Herd)**, takes part in CAP's educational programs and assisting in members' professional development. Van spent his childhood years traveling with his father, a corporate pilot who regularly flew business jets around the United States. Van spent so much time in the cockpit that when he first took the controls at the age of 12 on a flight with his father, the feeling of flying wasn't all that surprising. He is still flying when he can. When Harvey came calling, the CAP stepped in to help. The CAP Harvey Mission ran from around August 20 to Sunday, Sept. 17th. He was "deployed" (in quotes, as CAP members are civilians and not under military oath) in 2 areas, San Antonio (Command Base) and at the San Marcos airport (North Base). Van's specific duty was Mission Radio Operator (MRO), whose job it is to stay in radio contact with the air crews that they have in the air, which ranged from 1-12 at any given time. It is the job of the MRO to keep in contact with these crews and relay their messages to the commanders as needed, and vice versa. It was challenging, but fun, and they were able to help a lot of folks. Van says, "It was a privilege to meet so many wonderful CAP members who came in literally from all over the nation to help out."

sin, Wesley was born on September 8th and weighed in at 8 pounds 15 ounces and was 20 inches long. Debby (Nana) met her grandson when she went to visit for a week in late September. Caleb and Zoey Parkhill are excited at having a new cousin.



9/24/17 Debby Kohrt with new grandson Wesley while visiting in Wisconsin



9/17 Major Van Herd, Civil Air Patrol

Debby Kohrt is delighted to announce the birth of her new grandson **Wesley John Kohrt**, son of Jarod and Laurel Kohrt who live in Jefferson, Wisconsin- 3

At age 101, one would think that the risk of appendicitis would be small, but our former church pianist **Florence Castle** found out otherwise recently when she was admitted to the hospital September 11 after a day and a half of belly pain. Her wonderful caregiver Mary Jo Ingram took her to a clinic and then, at their recommendation, to St. David's South to see what was the matter. It took them a while to diagnose her, but they finally agreed that it was appendicitis—and that surgery was not an option. Fortunately she responded well to antibiotics, spent one week in the hospital, and went home on the 18th. She is slowly recuperating with the help of a visiting nurse and an occupational and a physical therapist. Mary Jo reports that last week Florence felt well enough to play the piano for a little while (the one her folks gave her when she was 16—in 1932). Florence's son Paul is on the job late afternoons after he gets off work, evenings, and weekends. Get well, soon, Florence!

Heart of Texas Association News October

Heart of Texas Association News

Our fall Association Meeting is coming up very soon **at Church of the Savior in Cedar Park on Saturday, November 4th, 10 am through lunch.** One major item on the agenda will be the Ecclesiastical Council for Andrew Young, Member in Discernment with Trinity Church of Austin. We will be sending Andrew's ordination paper out to all of our Association churches, along with a more detailed invitation to the fall meeting, in the next few weeks. All Association church members are invited. As many of you know, ministers are ordained by the Association in the United Church of Christ for ministry throughout our denomination. Our Association Committee on Ministry and the candidate's home church work with Members in Discernment throughout the ordination process. The Ecclesiastical Council is the time and place for the final step, and therefore is crucial to ministry for the whole United Church of Christ. I hope many of you will join us for the important work of examining Andrew for approval for ordination, for joining together in worship and fellowship, and for doing the business together of our Association.

Churches throughout our Association have responded with full generosity and concern to the Hurricane Harvey disaster. I am so very thankful for all that you have done -- the gifts and work that I already know about and that I don't yet know about. Already, a group from Friedens Geronimo went down to Rockport hauling two bobcats to help with the clean up, individuals from Trinity Church of Austin have gone to help, at least two churches have given a number of clean up buckets to Church World Service, many have donated hygiene kits and other requested items locally, Weimar UCC has been involved helping with those who were flooded in La Grange, and many of you have given money. And these are just examples that I know of so far.

As many of the Association pastors know, I attended a meeting in Houston recently for UCC clergy

and other interested persons with our UCC Disaster Ministry staff person, our Conference volunteer Disaster Coordinator, and Don Longbottom. Dan DeLeon and Ryan Hart were also there from our Association. We heard stories about the flooding in Houston from local people there, heard about how our Houston churches have opened their doors to help with the distribution of needed supplies, and learned how the UCC is responding. Denominations and other groups generally specialize in different aspects of disaster work. The UCC's commitment and expertise is generally in long term disaster recovery, meaning that our denomination will be providing seed money to help form long term local disaster recovery committees in the community and providing volunteer opportunities in the rebuilding process (not limited to our church members but to the entire community) over a number of years. The money we donate will mainly come in now but be spent over a long period of time, as happened after Hurricane Katrina. Our volunteer teams will start work in a few months, after the initial clean up has been done. I encourage our churches to start identifying who would be willing to go to Houston and South Texas for this work. It is already possible to sign up for a volunteer list on the UCC Disaster Recovery website for future contact to set up these teams (http://www.ucc.org/disaster_hurricane_harvey). In the short term, the South Central Conference is collecting money to help Christ UCC Cypress meet their insurance deductible, as the church was flooded for the second time in the Harvey rains. The Conference will also give other help to our churches to the extent we have the money to do so.

I look forward to working together in our churches and as an Association in the coming months to give toward our brothers and sisters in need.

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash, Association Minister

Personals (continued)

by Pat Oakes

9/28/17 Lynne Lemley and Betty Bodman were terrified when Captain Hook showed up at the Equal Justice Center's offices where folks enjoyed delicious barbecue but no golf! because of rain.



chance to talk about their connections to the Equal Justice Center. Attending from our church were **Bill Beardall**, the amazing director of the EJC and our host for the event, **Kevin Dietz**, **Abby Lundgren**, **Bryan Rutherford**, **Mel and Pat Oakes**, **Betty Bodman**, and **Lynne Lemley**. Lynne is hoping that she can make it to the make-up golfing evening at Peter Pan Golf. That date will be announced soon—and also the number of dollars raised in this annual fundraiser.

Colin (our former church cellist) and his wife **Eli Ferguson** recently enjoyed a visit from Colin's dad. Grandpa (Abuelo) was delighted to meet his new granddaughter **Soneto Ann**, now 7 1/2 months old. Colin and Eli report that her first tooth was coming through and because of all of her screaming, they have figured out she was as excited about her tooth as they were! She is also happily crawling faster and faster. Colin has completed the third quarter of his physical therapy assistant degree at South University and he is half way through with the program. His next couple of quarters will include clinical rotations, the first one being home health pediatrics. Colin and Eli celebrated their second wedding anniversary on September 5. They are looking forward to bringing Soneto to church soon .

Lynne Lemley had hoped to have her first real opportunity to play miniature golf at the Equal Justice Center's Peter Pan golf tournament on Sept. 28, but wouldn't you know, it rained. Instead, a large number of folks convened at the Equal Justice Center's offices at 510 South Congress and enjoyed delicious barbecue, vegetarian curry, craft beer and other treats. Conversation was lively as the many different groups who are proud supporters of the EJC had a



9/28/17 It rained, so the golfing part of the Equal Justice Center's fundraiser was postponed, but marvelous barbecue was enjoyed by many folks including Pat Oakes, Kevin Dietz, Mel Oakes, Betty Bodman, and Lynne Lemley



9/17 Bright-eyed Soneto Ann Ferguson with her proud mom Eli

Mel and Pat Oakes had a wonderful but very short weekend visit with their daughter **Sarah** who came from D.C. to her Austin High School 30th class reunion. Her husband Joe would have liked to have come, but a legal case he was working on did not settle until too late for him to affordably get a plane ticket. She saw lots of old friends and Pat and Mel and Sarah hosted a small brunch on Sunday, October 1 (missing church!) so that there was more opportunity to visit.

Will Brown (a retired UCC pastor) and his wife **Hulen**, friends of our church for a number of years, retired to the Eden Hill Retirement Community in New Braunfels, TX, more than 5 years ago. They have not let retirement slow them down one bit. This year is their 5th year with United Church of Christ Partners in Service as long-term volunteers. At the end of September, they have returned from their 2 month stint as volunteers at the Back Bay Mission in Biloxi. Since they live at Eden Hill, they can leave their apartment with no worries.

Hulen Brown writes about her experience this summer:

After a few days, I sensed that the atmosphere around the mission felt different. Change was in the air. People I had become familiar with had moved on. New people had been hired on the staff. **Jill** was retiring after nine years with the Food Pantry. There was a sense of celebration mixed with sadness in the air. Two of our Micah Day Center guests had died tragically. One of the most familiar guests had moved on, but now has terminal cancer. Another guest excitedly showed me her new ID badge. She is now housed and working in a government job. Sustainable changes. There are many more local volunteers than in years past. This time I got to see homelessness up close and personal. Before I think I only saw the “sanitized version” of homelessness from a distance. But when the offices were closed and the work camps weren’t here I got to watch the homeless people around the campus of Back Bay Mission coming and going, waiting, and being human. I was re-awakened as I got a close look at the reality of what homeless people must do to survive day to day. It wasn’t pretty. On Thursday, August 24th around 11:30 a.m. I was standing on the porch of the Mission House watching for Deborah, 6

the Day Center Coordinator. We were assigned to staff the Back Bay Mission booth that afternoon at the SUCCESS Women’s Conference. The all-day event was taking place at the IP Casino. I was eager for an opportunity to work closely with Deborah for the first time. I saw a neatly dressed woman approaching the administration office which was closed for the day. I went down to meet her and introduce myself. She wanted information about the types of services that Back Bay Mission provided. I gave her a brief overview and asked what kinds of services she was interested in. She said that she was currently sleeping in her car. She was homeless because of a relationship that had turned violent. She had started to work at a new job assisting in a law office. The person she was living with came to where she was working and created a scene. The police were called to have the person removed. Her new employer let her go immediately. She was not bitter nor angry because she realized there were some mental issues involved. She said that each morning she wakes up in her car and thanks God for blessing her and protecting her. She said she was grateful because it could’ve been much worse. I also found out that she has a degree in Communications and an entrepreneurial spirit. This was the first time she had ever been homeless. Then she showed me these cute little clear plastic containers of fresh fruit with a little fork taped to the side. She was selling them for \$5.00 to the construction workers. This is how she earned money to put gas in her car. She had been using her membership at Planet Fitness to take showers. At night she would park at the end of a pier on the beach where she prayed, made plans and prepared her fruit bowls to sell the next day. She said she knew God had a plan and a reason for allowing her to go through this and she was determined to stay positive. I was amazed and moved by her attitude as she was telling me about the challenges she was dealing with. I told her that she could come to the Micah Day Center tomorrow morning at 9 o’clock. She could take a shower, receive clean clothing and hygiene items and speak with Ann McWilliams, the Case Manager. She said she would be there. I told her we needed folks like her in the Back Bay Mission network because she is a

survivor. I invited her into the Mission House and explained what I do as the Volunteer Coordinator. She asked me for some ice for her bag that she kept her fruit in. She never asked for a place to sleep. I told her we're not a shelter. I explained that the Mission House has 44 beds for volunteers who come from throughout the United States and pay to spend the week serving here in Biloxi. She seemed impressed with the work of Back Bay Mission. She said she would come back tomorrow/Friday. I visited many of the booths at the SUCCESS Women's Conference. It was a powerful experience to be in the presence of so many professional women that are pulling together by providing services in the Gulf Coast. I told Jill about my meeting with the woman at the mission, that she had a College degree in Communications, and that she was sleeping in her car. Jill got excited. She had just heard that one of the non-profit agencies, Rebekah's House, was looking to hire

someone. Jill said this woman may be suited for the position because of her degree in Communications. I said we needed to wait to see if she would show up at the Micah Day Center and go through the intake process with Deborah and Ann. She did show up. She went through the intake process. Ann gave her Jill's contact phone number, she called from Ann's office. She set up an appointment for Monday for the interview. I prayed that the weather would stay nice that weekend and it did. She went through their interview process and they hired her the same day. She did not spend one more night in her car. They hired her and gave her the keys to a beautiful house to manage as a Shelter for Homeless Women with Children! Our Back Bay Mission team STOOD TALL together and gave this woman the hand up that she needed. God truly did have a good plan and I feel honored to have had the privilege to play a part in it.

History Corner
by Pat and Mel Oakes

(Mel Oakes found these photo treasures while rummaging through the archives.)
S. Marcus Houge: Pastor from September 1, 1935 - March 1, 1940



About 1937:

Before:

Rev. S. Marcus Houge at the pulpit during his early ministry

(continued on p. 8.)

November Visitor Deadline—Oct. 29, 2017

Mark Houge (1905-84). In the fall of 1935, S. Marcus Houge was called to the church following graduation from Chicago Theological Seminary. He continued the student work already in “full-swing” with an average attendance of 45 in the Fellowship Club, and added to the program: Campus Critics, a group which met to discuss books on social, economic and political issues. He was very interested in ACTION, not just talk. During Lent, he was asked by radio station KNOW to read a meditation each day except Sunday, and then, by popular demand, he was asked to continue with the meditation the rest of the year. He led the project to refurbish the Chancel—had it ready by Easter—and presented the JUNIOR Choir at that time wearing their new vestments. (The robes were made by the women of the church.) He served on the arbitration board in San Antonio dealing with a pecan

strike and started the unified church service joint picnic with the San Antonio church, and held services with the University Presbyterian Church. He held meetings on civil liberties, natural resources, taxation, amendments to Texas Constitution and “How the U. S. can stay out of next war.” He supported the Emergency Peace campaign. He campaigned against the establishing of an ROTC unit on the UT Campus. The young people in the church attended a camp at Carterville, OK. Many programs were started during his ministry, including a Student Religious Council, an inter-church youth council of the University churches plus youths from the YMCA and YWCA. He was chosen to provide the invocation at the 1938 UT Commencement. For more information about Rev. Houge, go to <http://server16.websitehostserver.net/~patandme/CCAHistory/MarcusHogue.html>

After: The newly renovated chancel was ready for **Easter Sunday, April 17th, 1938**, with Rev. S. Marcus Houge as minister. His wife Marguerite is at the piano and the junior choir is ready to sing.

