

THE VISITOR

November 2012

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt

Rev. John Towery, Pastor Emeritus

When I think of stewardship, a number of words that I relate to stewardship spring to mind: gift, gratitude, generosity, justice, and peace. And one phrase, "give us this day our daily bread," encapsulates the relationship between these words.

When we pray for our daily bread, we acknowledge that our bread comes ultimately from God—source of seed, soil, sun, and rain, source from which the sacred energy of life arises within and around us. We may plant the seed, harvest the grain, knead the dough, bake the loaf, or buy the finished product from our local store, but we're not the source of our daily bread. Nor are we the source of our own lives. We're recipients of a generous gift called life, and dependent upon all from God's Earth that sustains our lives.



When we pray for our daily bread, we acknowledge our corporate need for bread, and our responsibility to share this bread. We pray for *our* bread, not *my* bread. Every single person in creation is dependent upon God and *other people* for bread. Christian mystic Meister Eckhart was keen to our radical interdependence when he wrote, "There is no such thing as 'my' bread. All bread is 'ours,' and it is given to others through me, and to me through others. For not only bread but all things necessary for sustenance in this life are on loan to us with others, and because of others, and for others, and to others through us."

In the Bible, holiness includes the just distribution of the harvest so that everyone has sufficient bread to feed their hunger, while un-holiness includes an unjust distribution that enables a few to hoard more than they need while many scrape by without enough. In the Biblical drama, this unholy reality becomes the dominant one, a reality God's prophets judge and condemn. When Jesus preaches the kingdom of God on earth, he preaches the overturning of this dominant reality by a new one in which all recognize their dependence on God and their interdependence with one another, one in which all who hunger receive the bread that is their right.

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When we pray for our daily bread, I'm reminded that Earth doesn't belong to us, we belong to Earth and to the One who created Earth, who in a spirit of love and generosity provides all we need to flourish and enjoy life with the provision that we share what we harvest from Earth in a manner that's just. This is also how I think of stewardship. Stewardship includes the wisdom of knowing what belongs to whom, gratitude to the giver for what's been given, the generosity of an open heart and hands, and a commitment to justice. That's not to say I'm a paragon of wisdom, gratitude, generosity, and justice. I'm not. But stewardship is a practice that incorporates all these related spiritual disciplines. Ideally, we practice them together as Christ's church. Together, we acknowledge to God to whom we belong, express our gratitude to God for the gift of life and one another, open our hearts and hands to God and one another, and commit to God and one another to work for justice on God's Earth. For me, these are the spiritual disciplines that contribute to creating peace on Earth.

Stewardship includes, but isn't limited to, pledging money to the church. By pledging money to the church, we promise to financially support the Christian community that encourages and supports our on-going spiritual practice, the community in which we together pray "give us this day our daily bread," and the community in which we seek to discern and live out the depth and breadth of this prayer.

This year, Pledge Sunday will be **November 18**. Before the 18th, please take some time to reflect on what stewardship means to you, and how much your church means to you.

TOM

Radical Christian Life

**Equipping Ourselves for Social Change
with Joan Chittester and Richard Rohr
Nov. 9– 11, 2012**

Live Webcast at **St. Hildegard's Community**, Austin. Live TV presentations from **Joan Chittester**, followed by small group discussions. One of the small groups will be led by **Greg Futch** from our church. On Sunday, **Richard Rohr** will deliver a sermon, which will be recorded, and replayed at 4 pm at the Hildegard center. Call 524-5145 for more info or to register, or call **Greg Futch** at 740-2165. A meal on Saturday is included.

Our Youth Want You To Know! . . . by Beth Gleason

Last Sunday the youth voted on two Sunday school prayer topics which will involve mini-excursions in Austin. We will be experiencing a local labyrinth as a form of walking meditation on Sunday, November 11th, and in December we will be both making and looking at **Tibetan** mandala's at the **Blanton Museum**. The youth are also starting to plan fundraising for going to the **Mid-Winter UCC Youth Retreat at Slumber Falls Camp** in **New Braunfels**, Jan 4-5th . . . so be on the look-out, church family, for a youth fundraiser soon!

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.

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

Cathy Hubbs celebrated her 90th birthday in fine style at church on Sunday, October 7th. Joining her for her big day were her daughters **Laura** (who came in from Stillwater, Oklahoma) and **Ann** (who came in from Morgantown, West Virginia), son **John** and daughter-in-law **Doris** (who came in from Kingsport, Oklahoma), and Cathy's brother and sister-in-law **Robert and Alice Faye Symons** (who came in from Los Altos, California). Everyone enjoyed cake and punch and other goodies at coffee hour and everyone especially enjoyed serenading Cathy with one of Nodie Murphy's fabulous songs. Happy birthday, Cathy!!!



Ann, Laura, Alice Faye Symons, Cathy Hubbs (birthday girl), Robert Symons (Cathy's brother), John and Doris Hubbs, at the Oct. 7th church celebration of Cathy's 90th birthday.

Whit Bodman had a rather unpleasant surprise on Tuesday, Oct. 16. The week prior he had felt some uncomfortable chest pains and left arm tingling, but attributed it to



Whit Bodman looking good after open heart surgery 10 days prior with two wonderful nurses, his wife Betty and Ranae Beeker on Oct. 28th.

other causes. The 16th was the night of a presidential debate and when the pains started up again he thought it was related to the debate but as the night wore on he decided that maybe he and **Betty** should go to nearby **St. David's Hospital** — where he was promptly admitted. On Thursday, the 18th, Whit had open heart surgery to take care of the 100 percent blocked **LAD** (lateral anterior descending) artery. Whit did wonderfully (as did his surgeon!) and was back at home on Monday working on lectures for his classes at the **Austin Presbyterian Seminary**. Of course, Whit is very lucky to have excellent nursing care at home — Betty teaches nursing courses at **Austin Community College**. Imagine our astonishment when Whit and Betty showed up at church on the 28th of October — just 10 days after his surgery!

Nodie and Dennis Murphy enjoyed an almost 2 week visit with their son **Ned**, but there were many mixed feelings while they were together. Brother **Seth** and sister **Sarah** and her family were also able to visit. Ned left on Friday, the 26th, to go back to **Ft. Drum** near **Syracuse** in upstate New York for further training. He is working in Army surveillance and will be working with a training unit for dogs who are trained in sniffing out explosives. Ned will be deployed to **Afghanistan** in **January**. Ned's wife **Faye** was unable to be with Ned in Austin as her father died and she was at home in Minnesota arranging the funeral. The whole family is grateful that her father lived long enough to walk her down the aisle at their wedding in May. We will be keeping you in our prayers, Ned.

Mary Towery Masters has quite an extensive update on the Towery family. **John** (pastor emeritus of this church) and **Eleanor** are doing OK at **The Cottages at Chandler Creek in Round Rock**. John is doing much better than at this time last year and is now able to push Eleanor in her wheelchair. They will celebrate their 62nd wedding anniversary on **December 9th**. Mary suggests that if you would like to drop them a note or a card, send it care of Mary Masters, 109 D.B. Wood Road, Georgetown, TX 78628, and she will deliver it to them. **Mary and Danny** just celebrated their 37th wedding anniversary and their son **Ricky** and his wife **Monica**, parents of daughter **A.J.** who is not quite 2, just celebrated their 4th. Monica and Ricky are delighted that they are expecting again in April, but devastated that Monica has just been diagnosed with stage zero breast cancer. She will be undergoing a double mastectomy the first week of November. They had to wait until she was in her 2nd trimester before doing the surgery. Mary is grateful that she is available to help with A.J. and also to assist Monica's

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mother **Caroline Pfeifer** as time allows. Everyone is keeping a very positive attitude and hoping and praying for the best for Monica and the baby. If you would like to send them a card, the address is Ricky and Monica Masters, 1110 CR 410, Taylor, TX 76574. **Ches and Maggie Towery** are doing well; their son **KC** has gotten a great job in his banking field and wife **Kendra** is teaching 8th grade English; daughter Krystal is working full-time on her Master's in Education through Texas State in Round Rock. **Tommy and Sally Towery Johnson** are doing well in Massachusetts as are Tanya (Johnson) and John Reynolds and their baby.

Church cellist **Colin Ferguson** was missing from church on Sunday, October 21st. He was in **Valparaiso, Indiana**, serving as a groomsman for our former violinist **Andy Strietlemeier** and his bride **Denita**. The wedding was in the chapel at **Valparaiso University** with a reception following at a barn with a tent out in the countryside. The 200+ wedding guests included some of Andy's relatives from **Slovakia** and a number of Denita's relatives from **Fargo, North Dakota**. Colin was there for the bachelor party on Thursday and came back home on Monday. Colin is so happy he went and said that both Andy's and Denita's families are wonderful.



Andy Strietlemeier and his bride Denita on their wedding day. Oct. 21, 2012, held in the chapel at Valparaiso University.

Ellie Nash is living and working in Austin this year. She is managing a tutoring group at **Ortega and Govalle** elementary schools for Sylvan Learning Centers. The students are pulled out for extra help during the regular school day. Ellie is well-qualified for this work as she was teaching for **Teach for America** for the past two years in Dallas.

The leaves are changing and beautiful in New Jersey on the Drew campus and all along **Talley's** daily train ride in NYC. **Rose and Vivian** are enjoying the crisp evenings of their second fall in the Northeast. Vivian got braces and Talley is contemplating reading glasses, so every one is aging accordingly! **Elizabeth** has (mostly) landed on topics for all her semester papers and is reading and researching intensely while also getting ready for the annual **American Academy of Religion** conference in Chicago this November. Talley recently got to spend the day in an urban, youth-managed, community garden in Brooklyn as part of his company's efforts to learn more about the UN's Millennium Goal of Environmental Sustainability. It reminded him of the children's garden at CCA UCC — only much bigger! Note — Talley's contribution was written before **Hurricane Sandy** paid them a visit!

Here is something fun to do after church on Sundays- take a short trip to **The Mueller Farmer's Market** with over 40 vendors, most especially **Julia Deisler's** booth featuring her own **Gypsy Grove Foods**. She will be there every Sunday from 10 to 2. She is selling Gypsy Knots ("Tie one on, you'll love them"), Julia's "Everybody Wants It Toffee," Chim-Chimmichurri (a condiment for grilled meats) and, of course, Julia's Caesar (wonderful salad dressing). The market is under the old **Browning Hanger** off of Airport Boulevard. It isn't too early to start thinking about special gifts for the holidays. Julia is delighted that her kids **Ava, Olivia, and Eric** have all gotten their food handlers licenses so that it is becoming a family enterprise.



Andy Strietlemeier and his bride Denita.

John and Carol Burlinson are looking forward to their son **Jake's** return sometime in December. October can be very violent in **Afghanistan** as the insurgents put on one last big push before winter sets in and the fighting slows down until spring. However, Jake's Guard company is making preparations to wind down their deployment. **Medevac** missions have slowed somewhat and Jake is now often on loan to his battalion's "lift unit" which flies troops to and from bases around the country. His company got a morale lifter recently - a visit from four



First lieutenant Jake Burlinson in Afghanistan, a Medevac pilot in a Blackhawk helicopter

Miami Dolphins cheerleaders. The American troops enjoyed getting autographs and pictures taken with the girls, who were in full costume, but the local Afghans were truly swept away. For those of you who remember Jake or who would just like to cheer up a soldier, Jake's address is:

1Lt Jacob Burlinson
F/1-171 MEDEVAC
TF Gunslinger
FOB SHARANA
APO, AE 09311

Mary Sinclair and Richard Jackson are just home from a short trip to **Quebec City** and **Montreal**. Their Australian friends were on a leaf-peeper cruise which terminated in Quebec City, so they met them there and had great fun wandering the streets of old Quebec, indulging in lots of food, wine, and the best chocolate they've ever tasted. In Montreal, they rode to the top of **Mont Royal** and walked several kilometers back down causing four pairs of sore legs. For BBC "Mystery" fans, they met **Nathaniel Parker**, the actor who played **Inspector Lynley** in the BBC series based on Elizabeth George's books, as he was staying at the same hotel. Mary says, "Absolutely charming and he was in town to act in a series based on the books of a Canadian writer, **Louise Penney**, where he will play a French-Canadian police inspector. He's really gor-

geous!" They came home to **Heidelberg** and had a wonderful party to celebrate their combined 25th wedding anniversaries. Mary and Richard's was in September and their friends' will be next month, but this was the perfect opportunity for a party. Happy anniversary! Mary and Richard send their best to **Cathy Hubbs** on her birthday. Mary says that **Martin Bukasa** says hello and best wishes from the kids to **Cateringee** (their pronunciation of her name many years ago!)

Inimitable **Kathleen Strong** has this "no story is too small" to report, "I got the dishes done two days in a row, no, make that one day. The kitchen light needs to be fixed. I need to sweep the front porch. There, that'll take care of the front page."

The church has received a wonderful gift from former member **Lois Drachenberg**. She sent a picture-filled memoir that John had prepared before he died for all of us to enjoy. Look for it on the top of the chair/table storage unit/information area in the fellowship room. Lois is doing all right but finds it very hard to write. When John was ill, she fell in the hospital and did something bad to her right shoulder which still does not work right. She is still very involved in the church and has wonderful friends who look out for her. She sends her love to everyone.

It was wonderful to see **Linda (Bulkeley)** and **Leland Morine** at church on the 28th of October. They were in town for the first time in 6 years after visiting the family farm in north central Texas. They are still living in the East Bay area near San Francisco. They are old friends of **Lois and John Drachenberg** (mentioned above). In fact, John performed the marriage ceremony for Leland and Linda. John and Leland worked at the same church in Oakland some years ago. Linda was an active member of this church in the mid -1980s.



Doyal Pinkard and Sara Ross enjoyed catching up with Linda (Bulkeley) and Leland Morine on Sunday, Oct. 28th.

Brazos Association News

November

by Liz Nash

The Brazos Association Fall Meeting was held on Saturday morning, October 23th. Our friends at Weimar UCC were great hosts. They set the tone with a generous welcome and good food.

We began with worship, with singing led by **Jerry Carpenter** with his clear tenor voice. After approving minutes, hearing the treasurer's report, and approving a budget, we heard from those who shared about the work of the church. Two of our six Association in discernment (in care) students, **Beth Gleason** from Congregational Church of Austin and **Ken Ingram** from United Christian of Austin, told us about their progress toward ordination. We also gave a joyful welcome to **Jennifer Veninga**, who was with us as a new minister in our Association. She is an Assistant Professor of Religious and Theological Studies at St. Edward's University and also works part time in campus ministry there. **Charles Stark**, director of Slumber Falls Camp, updated us on the camp, and **Jerry Guelker**, our South Central Conference Board of Directors representative, shared news of the SCC Board priorities for the coming year.

Two highlights of the meeting were the sharing from the National Youth Event and a presentation on Back Bay Mission. The youth from Friends Congregational made a video interviewing each other about highlights of NYE. **Katelyn Williamson** from the Friends youth brought it with her to show us. Their presentation was a creative and very appreciated "thank you" to all of us for helping fund the trip for nearly 30 from the Brazos Association. **Anne Wehrly**, in her role as a member of the Back Bay Mission Board, then both spoke and showed a video on the current work of Back Bay Mission. After the long and difficult post-Katrina rebuilding (both of Back Bay's buildings and the enormous rebuilding of the entire area), Back Bay's work now includes the services to the homeless and poor it has in the past along with an expanded ministry to build and provide housing for lower income people. For many years, their workcamp program has attracted church groups from around the US to help with their many projects. We discussed sponsoring an Association workcamp trip to Back Bay, and we will be considering whether to make this commitment at our next Association Executive Board meeting. (The trip would mostly likely be in 2014 or late 2013 – these opportunities fill well in advance). Those present were invited to sign up to indicate interest in joining a workcamp trip there, and I would welcome contact from any of you (at lizknash@gmail.com) if you are interested.

Other highlights of the meeting were two excellent presentations on theological education. **Beth Gleason**, our Association representative to the South Central Conference CUE Committee (Chicago, United, and Eden seminaries) encouraged us to have 100% of our churches give to CUE, since this is the way we contribute to the education of our ministers in our area of the UCC. We are close to that goal, and I hope all of our churches can make gifts. **John Will**, a retired UCC minister known to many of us, traveled with his wife, **Han**, down from Fort Worth to share two exciting opportunities on behalf of CUE. **Chicago Theological Seminary** now offers an entire Master of Divinity program through its online teaching. Coursework is taken online, and the seminary will work with conferences to help place students locally in internships and in clinical pastoral education. Online students are eligible to apply for scholarships just like on site students. **Eden Theological Seminary** is considering continuing its program of 100% scholarships to first year students, which has allowed students to enter this year with the prospect of a greatly reduced student debt load. Both of these programs are enormous steps in making a seminary education more possible and accessible to those who are called to Christian ministry. We were so glad to welcome **John and Han**.

We ended with a delicious barbeque lunch. Our meeting was a warm gathering that allowed us to renew ties between our churches as much as it allowed us to conduct business. And that time to renew our covenant among our churches with great fellowship is the glue that joins us in commitment to Christ's work. It's the best part of these meetings.

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash
Brazos Association Minister

We had another familiar face from our past in the congregation on the 28th. **Karen Carter-Cohn**, mother of our former pianist **Aaron Carter-Cohn**, was in town to visit. She is now back in her **Lake Buchanan** home after spending a good deal of time in the past 2 1/2 years near Cleve-



Nodie Murphy visiting with Karen Carter-Cohn at church Oct. 28.

land, Ohio, helping her daughter and her husband with their now 2 1/2 year old twin boys. **Aaron** continues to work and thrive in **Columbus, Ohio**, and gets to play the uncle role every now and again when he visits his sister in Cleveland.

Kathy Whatley, CCA Office Manager and her husband **Dan** just returned from 10 days in **Paris**. The weather was



Kathy Whatley at the Palais Garnier in Paris.

really warm for several days, so they almost felt as though they were in Texas! Kathy reports that her most memorable moments include strolling the **Champs-Élysées** and visiting the **The Palais Garnier**, probably the most famous opera house in the world. It is a symbol of Paris like **Notre Dame** cathedral, the **Louvre**, or the **Sacré Coeur** basilica (all of which they were able to tour). The **Palais Garnier** was used as the setting for Gaston Leroux's 1911 novel *The Phantom of the Opera* and the novel's subsequent adaptations in films and Andrew Lloyd Webber's popular 1986 musical. They also made the climb to the butte **Montmartre** and spent a full day at the **Musée d'Orsay**.

Pat and Mel Oakes had a wonderful 2 week visit with friends in England in late September and early October. They were delighted to be back just in time for Cathy's birthday party. They spent most of the time in Bristol with old friends from FSU days more than 50 years ago, but also enjoyed a visit with **Graham and Meredith Parker** (Meredith is the daughter of our late member Mary Charles Williams who was a long-time friend of Pat's and Pat's parents in Miami). A highlight of the visit with Meredith and Graham was going to **Plymouth** and standing on the Mayflower steps where Pat's ancestors **Priscilla Mullins** and **John Alden** embarked for the New world in 1620. Just four days after they got back from England, daughter **Mardie** arrived with her 5-month-old son **Durham** (dad **Tony** was back home working)--bringing him for his first visit to Austin. He was duly admired and entertained and declared to be as adorable as Pat thought.



Pat, Mardie, Durham, and Mel at church on Sunday, Oct. 14, 2012

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

Return Service Requested

Deadline for December Visitor — Nov. 21

Supporting Lifeworks, A Remarkable Organization by Marilyn Vache

Our church has become an important supporter of **Lifeworks**, a local agency with a \$9 million budget and a mission to help young people and their families.

We are familiar with the homeless youth that **Lifeworks** serves from our church -- with street outreach, freeze night shelters, medical and dental clinics, and administrative staff occupying both the Appel Room downstairs and the offices upstairs. Lifeworks staff is very grateful for our support - it puts them in the thick of the population they serve in spite of some opposition from neighbors who don't necessarily want homeless people nearby.

But that's just a small piece of the services that **Lifeworks** offers in eight Austin locations. Here's a sampling:

- Counseling services including anger management, family therapy, and access to child psychiatrists.
- Housing options including a 20-bed emergency shelter for teenagers, a 16 bed group home providing a place safe to stay while youth up to age 22 transition to independent living, and a home for young mothers and their infants.
- Educational services providing adult basic education, English as a second language, GED and literacy classes, life skills training, and more.
- Cooperative services with schools in areas like safety, health, parenting, and resistance to peer pressure.

Go on-line for more information: <http://www.lifeworksaustin.org> and how you can donate or help in a variety of ways.