

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt

Rev. John Towery, Pastor Emeritus



In October, **The National Coalition for the Homeless** published a report entitled, *Share No More: The Criminalization of Efforts to Feed People in Need*. The report describes how cities across the country are passing legislation intended to make it more difficult for service organizations or churches to feed homeless people. Since January 2013, 21 cities have passed legislation restricting people's ability to feed the homeless, or banning them outright from doing so. In addition to the 21 cities that have already passed such legislation, ten more are considering it.

Typically, the legislation restricts a group's ability to feed homeless people by requiring it to apply for and purchase a special permit, and then limiting the number of permits the city will issue or making them prohibitively expensive. For example, a city may issue one permit per quarter, or charge over \$1,000 for a permit to feed people on one occasion.

Other cities are trying a different tactic, passing legislation requiring any location that prepares food for the homeless to pass a strict city code inspection, or requiring everyone volunteering on the premises to possess a food-preparers license, or mandating that any person who distributes food that's been cooked must possess a food-handler's permit. In other words, cities are creating codes that most places preparing food for the homeless, and most people distributing food to the homeless, cannot reasonably fulfill.

I'm all for ensuring that groups sharing food with homeless people do so in a safe manner. But none of these cities passed this legislation out of a concern that homeless people's health and safety were being compromised by unsafe food, or that the homeless people on their streets were not eating well. None of them decided to require permits and enforce stricter codes in order to improve the diets of homeless people. Just the opposite. This legislation was motivated by the desires to make homeless people less visible.

Homeless people congregate in places where food is shared, for the simple reason that they're hungry. And when homeless people congregate around food, they become more visible. They're harder to ignore as a group. It's easier to pretend they're not there when they're just the guy sitting on the bench, the woman in the park, or the kid on the corner. But when they congregate and become more conspicuous, the whole tragedy of homelessness is more exposed and harder to ignore. All that stuff they cart around. Clothes that don't get washed. Bodies that don't get showered. Human waste that gets left in inappropriate places. This can be unpleasant to see and smell if you have a home in which to sleep, a closet to store all your stuff, and ready access to a washing machine, shower, and toilet.

A lot of folks just don't want to see homeless people congregating. They don't want to be confronted with that unpleasantness while going to work, taking their kids to the park, or walking past the church on their way to class. They want to avoid that unpleasantness. On some level, they fear that unpleasantness. So what to do? The solution is simple. Restrict where homeless people can congregate around food. And do that by regulating the groups that share food with homeless people. Make it difficult to share food. Legislate the message: share no more.

In our spiritual tradition and practice, to open a space at your table for others is to open your heart to them. Inviting others to your table, breaking and sharing bread with them, signifies that you recognize them as your neighbor, that you love them as your neighbor, and that you accept the responsibility of being their neighbor. You will look after them, care for them, pick them up if you see them laying on the side of the road, spend your money to make them well, share the bread on your table when they're hungry.

To share bread with another is to become their companion. The Latin word for bread is *pan*, the root of our words companion, companionship, company. Bread-sharers. Life-sharers. Sharing bread with a stranger is what the **United Church of Christ** calls "extravagant hospitality." The Greek word for "hospitality" is *philoxenos*. *Philo* means "love" and *xenos* means "stranger." One stranger's heart opens to another stranger. One stranger invites another stranger to the table, then breaks and shares bread with another stranger. Two strangers now become companions. The world is transformed. It becomes a more loving and hospitable place.

When our church feeds homeless people, we practice *philoxenos*. Open-hearted love for the stranger. Extravagant hospitality. But if you push the homeless and the hungry away, and if you deny them their daily bread, you practice *xenophobia*. Fear of the stranger. And you transform the world. The world becomes a less loving and less hospitable place. Unfortunately, that's the transformation the cities restricting food to homeless people are bringing about.

Let us continue to open our hearts to the stranger, and seek to transform strangers into companions. Let us work for a world where nobody is homeless, and where nobody is denied their place at the table or their daily bread.

TOM

Austin Empty Bowl Project

Sunday, November 23

11 A.M. - 3 P.M.

The Marchesa Hall & Theatre in Lincoln Village

Preview Party on Saturday, November 22

6 P.M. - 9 P.M.

The Marchesa Hall & Theatre in Lincoln Village

Select your favorite from thousands of locally crafted ceramic bowls, have it filled with gourmet soup and bread and listen to live music while enjoying your lunch. Your \$20 donation goes to Kids Cafe, a program of the Capital Area Food Bank, and Meals for Kids, a program of Meals on Wheels & More. Love the Austin Empty Bowl Project but hate the line? Check out the preview party and get the VIP treatment. For more information and to purchase tickets, [visit their website](#).



You are invited to share in iACT's **30th Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service and Celebration** at Mt. Zion Baptist Church. A reception will follow the service.

We encourage you to bring your favorite dish, labeled for those with dietary restrictions, and share in the warmth of community.

Sunday, November 23, 2014 3:00 pm

Mt. Zion Baptist Church

Church Leadership

Trustees Chair	John Goff
Deacons Chair	Jaime Hadley
Outreach Team	Reuel Nash & Warinda Harris
Moderator	Barbara Burnham & Bill Beardall
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Pam Tucker
Christian Education	Rachel Dietz
Coordinators	Van Herd
Clerk	Betty Bodman
Historian	Pat Oakes
Web mistress	Sara Ross



Personals by Pat Oakes

Tom VandeStadt (front right in photo) presided over the **Austin Interfaith Candidates Assembly** on Oct 13th. The purpose of the Candidates Assembly was to challenge candidates for **City Council District 9** (where CCoA is located) to commit to action on social and economic concerns advanced by Austin Interfaith, including homelessness, affordable housing, and justice for immigrants in our community. Tom framed the message for the evening with an overview of economic inequality and social needs in Austin, including a review of the needs of homeless youth and the work CCoA and university area churches are doing to address those needs. He focused attention to the high rates of poverty and social distress in Austin and called on the Austin City Council candidates to commit to work with Austin Interfaith to increase the City Council's efforts to make Austin a city of shared prosperity.



Tom VandeStadt (front right) presiding over the Austin Interfaith Candidates Assembly on October 13th.

We have really been missing **Joe McMillan**, but he has very good reasons for not being at services on Sunday or singing in the choir. Last year Joe was involved with chemo and radiation—he is doing well—except for a radiation wound which will not heal. He has been taking hyperbaric treatments—30 sessions over six weeks, three hours per day. Joe finds the treatments pretty boring as the TV which is on in the room is either on the history channel or the cooking channel. It will be a number of more treatments to know if it is helping. In addition to that, his home of 18 years is being completely renovated due to years of accumulated water damage, taken down to the studs. As Joe says, "Every time it rained outside, it rained in the house." The house, which is outside the city limits, suffered from poor code management at the time it was built and bad drainage. Insurance is helping, but that adds to the hassle. Only one room has not been disturbed and that is the master bedroom and bath, so that Joe's two cats have a

place to live. He sees the cats every day which also takes time and energy. Joe is living at the Extended Stay America at 290 and MOPAC, as is Will Hall. Will's mother, who was also living with them in the house, had her gall bladder removed a month ago and is now in rehab for several months. Joe celebrated his **70th** birthday in July in **New York City** with his sister **Pamela Maynard** and her family and especially his now 8-year-old great-nephew and namesake **Jaden Joseph** (who was christened in our church several years ago). Since then he has been dealing with the house and the hyperbaric treatments. He and **Will** (who also had back surgery about a month ago) hope to be back in the house in December. We are all hoping for the best, Joe, and we hope to see you soon!



Amy Harris, Jonathan Geer, Tom VandeStadt, and Betty and Whit Bodman at the Equal Justice Center golf tournament,

Bill Beardall, Executive Director, is very pleased to report that the 13th Annual celebration and fund raiser for the **Equal Justice Center** was a great success. The golf tournament was held at **Peter Pan Mini Golf** on Barton Springs Road on **Thursday, October 16th**. Folks enjoyed barbecue, miniature golf, and fellowship, and a number of supporters from our church were there. Liz Nash made a hole in one on the last hole late in the evening when the best prizes had already been awarded, so Bill brought her

Brazos Association News

November

by Liz Nash

On Saturday, **October 11th**, I attended the South Texas Association meeting at **Bethany Congregational Church** in San Antonio. The major agenda item was a discussion of their request to merge with the Brazos Association. As required by their bylaws, they had a first reading of a motion for this purpose. The discussion was generally quite positive, with some questions about the configuration of Associations within the entire South Central Conference, discussion of the need to decide together on dues (which differ somewhat between South Texas and Brazos), examination of where churches are on a map of the two current Associations, and discussion of their current lack of an Association Minister. I shared the welcoming atmosphere at our Brazos Association forum in September. I also emphasized that, if we merge, we all become “us” as we make decisions about the new joined Association -- not as two groups bargaining together, but as one group in covenant, seeking to serve God more fully as part of the body of Christ. That is what I want to emphasize for the Brazos Association in this process.

The South Texas Association will have a second reading of the merger resolution and then a vote on it at a specially called meeting on **January 17th** at **Faith UCC** in **New Braunfels**. Let’s hold them in our prayers and thoughts as they prepare to make this decision.

October 11th was also an important day in the life of **United Christian Church of Austin** as we celebrated the

installation of **John Gage** as their senior pastor. Many clergy were present; several clergy and lay people from United, from the wider Association, and from the Disciples of Christ participated; and the service ended with a picnic. We hope and pray that John’s ministry there will flourish.

Our **Church and Ministry Committee** met on October 21st. We met with our current candidate for Licensed Ministry, **Carl Schwartz-King** of United Christian. He is doing his training through a recently started Certificate in Ministry online program at **Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary**, available to church leaders who are called to pursue theological training in depth. We also voted to adopt an appeal procedure recommended by the nation UCC for clergy who have been disciplined in a fitness review (the process followed when a substantial question of a clergy member’s fitness for ministry is raised). The Association Executive Board will also vote on this procedure. We then anticipate revising our Association bylaws in the coming months and incorporating the change.

Finally, in this time of work and thought about change, I give thanks for the dedicated and generous leadership of the Brazos Association.

Blessings in Christ
Liz Nash
Brazos Association Minister



Emily and Martin Garrison and Pastor Tom VandeStadt with newly installed senior pastor John Gage of United Christian Church .



Warinda Harris with sons Alden and William at the Equal Justice Center's fund-raiser and golf tournament

prize (an Equal Justin Center bag) and presented it to **Reuel** on Sunday the 19th as Liz was not in church.

A number of members from our church were pleased to attend the installation of **Rev. John MacIver Gage** as senior minister at **United Christian Church of Austin** on Saturday afternoon, October 11th. **Tom VandeStadt, Liz Nash,** and **Whit Bodman** assisted in the service. John was the first openly gay seminarian approved by the **Brazos Association** 14 years ago and he was in care in our church prior to his ordination. He was at the **Church on the Green** at **Yale** for 14 years and is pleased to be back home in Austin. (See photo on page 5)

Geneva Ross and her husband **Michael Neberman** drove to **Lake Tahoe** to attend a wedding over **Labor Day** weekend. On the way there, they stopped at the **Billy the Kid** museum outside **Fort Sumner** which was interesting, saw the **Grand Canyon** which was beautiful, saw Geneva's brother-in-law in **Laughlin, Nevada**, chatted with her sister in **San Mateo** and then off to the wedding which was conducted at a restaurant overlooking Lake Tahoe. The ceremony was beautiful and the scenery was awesome with the backdrop of the mountains and shimmering Lake Tahoe at sunset. On the return trip they saw the **Three Sisters Mountains** and on the way up the pass were informed by a roadside sign of the Christmas Postman found frozen to death in the service of delivering the mail on time (unfortunately it was his last time). They saw an attractive old Congregational church in **Silverton, Colorado**, and visited the **Ute Museum** in **Montrose, Colorado**, and learned about the "**Bear Dance.**" Later they went to **Pagosa Springs** and lounged in the multi-level multi-temperature pools until thoroughly relaxed and pruny. Then after three weeks gone, it was back home to Austin.

On Sunday, October 5, the church had a special birthday celebration both during the service and during coffee hour

in honor of **Marie Scheel** who had celebrated her 100th birthday the day before. Nodie wrote another of her famous songs, the choir provided refreshments for coffee hour and **Pat Oakes** baked a cake. Marie was the choir director at the church for many years and also taught music for AISD. Her late husband **Weldon** was also a musician in Austin and sang in our choir for many years. Marie still lives in the home where he and Marie moved in the 1940s. Marie enjoyed catching up with her many old friends in the church and enjoyed meeting new ones.



Three beautiful seniors--Cathy Hubbs, 92, Marie Scheel, 100, and Florence Castle, 98 at Marie's 100th birthday celebration.

Becky Nash was in **Cappadocia** with other students on their five day break before going to **Istanbul** to fly to **India**. She went up in a hot air balloon and went hiking in the extraordinary terrain. She says that they were in safe places in Turkey. They flew to **Delhi** on the 13th of **October** to begin their time in India. A good part of her time in India will be in **Varanasi** (between **New Delhi** and **Calcutta**). They are staying in the same guest house, she thinks, as one of her **Berkshire** cousins, who is in a gap year program there with the same organization Becky did her gap year program with (in **Central America**). They are looking forward to seeing each other.

On **September 12**, **Janet Parsons** left Austin to spend four weeks with her brother **Paul** and his family in **Dayton, Ohio**. Paul has five lovely daughters and a thriving tree business, "Arbor Experts." Between the family's many activities and the busy home office, the house was in a constant sort of happy chaos - and so much fun! Their first activity was to run in the **Air Force Half Marathon** on the 20th. The weather was perfect, and they had a good run and a great time. On October 1, Paul, his daughter Elyse, and Janet drove to **Front Royal, Virginia**, to begin a week-long backpacking trip in **Shenandoah State Park**. What an adventure! First of all, it is hard work. In the mountains at a high elevation, climbing, climbing, climbing, carrying 30 to 40 pounds of gear and food - but there



Intrepid hiker Janet Parsons admiring the fabulous view from the Appalachian Trail .

are so many rewards. Janet notes that by far the most interesting part of backpacking is the other people you meet along the trail. Many of them were out for five or six months, hiking the entire **Appalachian Trail**, each for their own unique reason, and then there were many section hikers like Janet, et al, doing a piece of the trail at a time. The other rewards include the magnificent views, the amazing scenery, and the satisfaction of triumphing over the daily challenges. They had some adventures this trip with rain (lots of rain) and near freezing temperatures; however, they did not see any of the many black bear that live in this area, which would have been both frightening and very cool. Janet has so many stories to tell, so do ask. Janet says, " To close, I just have to say that out there we felt such a connection to and reliance on God, we began and ended each day in prayer and huge amounts of gratitude for the blessing and honor it was to be there."

It was good to see **Gail Christeson**, a senior research scientist for the **Institute for Geophysics**, the **Jackson School of Geosciences**, **UT**, back at church after being a part of two-month long seagoing research project aboard the **Joides Resolution**. She was involved in scientific ocean drilling as part of an international program involving researchers from ten different countries—113 on board the ship including the crew. The voyage started at **Yokohama** and ended two months later in **Taiwan**. They were at sea the whole time, but Gail reports that the food was good! If you would like to know more about the trip, go to <http://joidesresolution.org/node/3388>. Her husband **John Goff** (also a senior research scientist at the same institute) held down the fort while Gail was gone and did a fine job running the household and keeping track of **Cameron** and **Megan**.

Say hello to our new Sunday school teacher **Amy Rivera**. During the week Amy is a special education teacher for 2nd-5th grade students in **Pflugerville ISD**.



New Sunday school teacher Amy Rivera with some of her charges (from left) William Harris, Isabella Dietz, Harrison Tucker, Caleb Parkhill, Francesca and John Dietz.

We will have a more complete report next month on **Nodie** and **Dennis Murphy's Road Scholar** trip across **Canada** by train, but we can report that they loved meeting up with **Ellie Nash** and her boyfriend **Louis Rodgers** in **Montreal** and then having a wonderful dinner with former members **Richard Jackson** and **Mary Sinclair** in Toronto.



Dennis and Nodie at the Jean Talon market in Montreal with Ellie Nash and her boyfriend Louis Rodgers.



Nodie and Dennis Murphy had a wonderful dinner with Dick Jackson and Mary Sinclair while they were in Toronto.



Tess Howicz made this delicious chocolate cake from scratch for science class.

Big changes are taking place in the **Dietz** family. Mom **Rachel** has gone back to teaching (part time—no such thing, of course) at **Lamar Middle School**. After 11 years out of the classroom, it has been a real adjustment for Rachel, as she is teaching a yearbook class and two creative writing classes for 6th graders. Rachel has company at **Lamar** since 6th grade daughter **Isabella** is in the fine arts academy (choir) there. **Francesca** and **John** are both at **Gullett Elementary School**. Dad **Kevin** has been doing his part in helping to get everything going this school year. He is an attorney for **Legal Aid** and is on a three month sabbatical with about a month to go. In addition to doing the grocery shopping and picking up the kids from school, etc., he is taking Spanish at the **Highland Mall ACC** campus. He reports that not only is he the most senior member of the class, he is the only one starting with zero **Spanish**—so the whole family is doing school work together in the evenings. Buen suerte!

classes. East coast hugs to everyone - we miss you very much!

Rich and Jane Thompson were in town briefly for the 175th anniversary celebration of the founding of Central Presbyterian Church. Rich was the pastor there for 9 years from 1986 until 1995 when he retired. At that point, Rich served as an our interim while our pastor **Yoshi Kaneda** was on sabbatical and then later after Yoshi retired and we were waiting for Tom to arrive in 2001. He sends his best regards to everyone and he and Jane encourage folks who will be up their way in **Ft. Collins, Colorado**, to come by for a visit.

Jen Howicz reports, "Things are going well in **West Chester, Pennsylvania**. We are very happy with **Tess'** new school, and she has settled in well. Her favorite classes are math and choir, and she's playing rec soccer again this season. The big news this month is that **Pat Oakes** now has competition for her amazing chocolate cake! Tess' first project in **Food Science** was to bake something from scratch. She did a fabulous job making her own chocolate cake with just a little help from Jim. It turned out very tasty, but Tess' critique is that it wasn't 'chocolaty' enough, so she wants to try again. Tess is also learning about portion control in her class, so she cut the cake into one-inch squares, to allow everyone one piece each day. **Jim** is enjoying his new job and Jen is muddling through paperwork to get her **Physical Therapist Assistant** license transferred to Pennsylvania. We're all adjusting to **Emily** being away (leaning a bit on **Facetime** technology...) but glad she is starting her college journey in Austin. She seems to be adjusting well, and enjoying her



Rich and Jane Thompson in Austin for the 175th anniversary of Central Presbyterian Church.

Marilyn Gaddis and **George Carruthers** just returned from a two week **Road Scholar** program that took them to the **Great Lakes** area. They Amtraked to **Michigan** to visit relatives and then met their travel group in **Detroit**. On the way to **Mackinac Island**, they explored the **Henry Ford Museum**, **Greenfield Village** (Marilyn rode the "Ole Time" carousel twice!), and **Frankenmuth** (Little Bavaria). The ride from the ferry to the **Grand Hotel** on **Mackinac Island** was by horse-drawn carriage. The island and the hotel have been on their "bucket list" and were as charming as in the travel ads. Yes, they do require you to "dress up" for dinner. They really enjoyed the two days spent learning about the history, especially the sailing races. Then it was on to **Sault Ste. Marie** to view the locks and visit the museum ship, **Valley Camp**. Across from their hotel, they boarded the **Agawa Canyon Train** for a 114 mile trek up the canyon. It was a little early for the full fall colors, but the wilderness was beautiful! Next stop was **Manitoulin Island** in **Lake Huron**. On the island, they explored the **M'Chigeeng First Nation Reserve** and the **Ojibwe Cultural Center**. The ferry took them to **Tobermory** on the **Bruce Peninsula** and then up 141 steps to a viewing tower at the nature museum. On to **Collingwood, Ontario**, for a lecture on the Great Lakes and to the **Village of Blue Mountain**, a very versatile all year family-friendly resort area. They rode the gondola to the top of the "mountain" for a great view of the area. At their next stop, they explored **Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons** - a 17th century **French Jesuit Mission** that is still active. At their last stop, **Toronto**, they toured the city and enjoyed a performance of "Wicked" at a renovated "old movie theater." The program had a fabulous Canadian tour guide who knew everyone, having been in the business for years. They spent several days visiting friends near **Watertown, New York**, before hopping back on Amtrak for San Marcos.

Paul Deisler writes from Corpus Christi to let those in the CCA who know him know that he is still alive and getting around. He wishes them all good health. This summer he took with him five members of his family on a **Caribbean** cruise to **Honduras, Belize and Cozumel, Mexico**, starting from and ending at **New Orleans**. The cruise was to celebrate Paul's granddaughter **Ellie Seno's** graduation in biology (pre-med) from **TCU** in **May**. She was thrilled and had a wonderful time. A tall, handsome, athletic-looking server from **Belorussia** was very taken with her, giving her his phone number and making her feel highly complimented. (She doesn't intend to call). The cruise was delayed until August so Ellie could complete her summer job as Sports Director at what used to be her summer camp, **Camp Champions**, on **Lake LBJ**. The rest of the party consisted of Ellie's mother, who is also Paul's daughter, **Jane Deisler-Seno** (who is, further-more, Paul's official caregiver, without whom he cannot travel), her

aunt and uncle, **Julienne LeMond** and **Conrad Deisler**, her aunt **Julia M. Deisler** from **Santa Fe** and Paul, the elder of the clan. To say that a good time was had by all would be a gross understatement. Three days before and one day after the cruise were spent in New Orleans, a city whose wonderfully exotic character need not be extolled here. Highlights there were meeting Paul's daughter-in-law's relatives, a visit to the excellent, enormous **WWII Museum** and EATING. The cruise ship, **Carnival Line's** "Dream", stopped at **Roatan Island, Honduras; Belize;** and **Isla de la Pasión de Cristo**, some miles off of the coast of Cozumel. Paul remained aboard at **Belize** where landing could only be by tender and there were too many steps for him to manage, in any case, with either his walker or wheelchair. As an old Navy man, he was perfectly happy to remain aboard ship watching the harbor's activity. **Roatan Island** is a beautiful and peaceful place far from the crime and mayhem of the mainland. Paul recommends the conch soup and the three friendly cats at the **Botanical Gardens**. The gardens were inaccessible to Paul so, seated in a small glen, he was visited by the pleasant cats while others hiked the trails. Paul and Jane had spent the day on the **Isla de la Pasión de Cristo** during their last cruise and went back this time for seconds. Everyone else in the party went, too, and all had a grand time on one of the world's little-known, beautiful beaches. There Paul continued his discussion, begun two year's previously, of **Chilean** politics with the owner of the *merendero* which served good food and drink. Paul can afford to eat nowadays, having lost 70 pounds in the first two years after Ellen's passing. All are ready to go again, any time, but Paul's purse is not ready, just yet. "To celebrate Ellie's eventual graduation from Medical School," Paul suggested, and with that a wonderful family trip ended. Next time, Paul wants to take still other family members, purse willing.

Mel and Pat Oakes hosted coffee hour on the 12th of October in celebration of their 50 years at the church. They arrived in Austin (for Mel to begin his post-doc at UT) on the **October 3, 1964**, a Saturday, so they did not get to church the next day. They had been intrigued by the map of the UT campus which showed a Congregational Church just west of the campus. The next Sunday they walked into the small church (Pat came from a huge church in **Cocoanut Grove, Florida**), and were delighted to find a diverse congregation, a warm welcome from the **Towerys**, and lovely music from the trio, a long-time institution in the church. They feel so blessed to have had so many wonderful years and to have made so many wonderful friends at the **Congregational Church of Austin**.

Mission & Outreach Opportunities

At the Congregational Church of Austin, UCC

As the church, we are called together by God to worship, share in Christian fellowship, and experience God's love for us. But God also sends us back into the world to share that love with others and to actively work for the healing, reconciliation, justice and peace that God intends for this world. Our church actively supports the following outreach ministries.

University Area Micah 6

The Congregational Church of Austin is an active member of the [University Area Micah 6 Ministry](#), through which the University area churches serve the needs of low-income and homeless people. Congregational Church members serve on the Micah 6 Board of Directors and the Micah 6 food pantry.

LifeWorks Street Outreach

Our church hosts the [LifeWorks Street Outreach Drop-In Center](#) and Medical Clinic. From our building, LifeWorks provides a variety of social work and medical services to area homeless youth.

Freeze Night Cold Weather Shelter

When the temperature dips below freezing we open our doors to homeless youth and provide them with an evening meal, a place to sleep, and a morning meal. Trained volunteers from our church work with staff from the LifeWorks Street Outreach program to maintain a safe environment during shelter evenings.

Porch Lunch Ministry

On the first, second and third Thursday of the month, church members prepare and serve lunch to homeless youth in our fellowship hall prior to the opening of the LifeWorks medical clinic housed in our church building.

Christmas Open Door Meal

On Christmas Day the Congregational Church of Austin celebrates Jesus' birth with a brief communion service in our sanctuary and then opens its doors to anyone who would like to enter our dining room for a Christmas meal of ham, turkey, stuffing, vegetables, and desserts. In the past few years, we have served 65 to 100 people on Christmas Day.

Sunday Food Offering

Sharing food was one of the primary ways Jesus communicated God's love to all people. Please bring some non-perishable food items (preferably pop-top cans, vegetables, and soup) to share with others when you join us for worship on Sunday mornings. The food you offer will be given to the LifeWorks Street Outreach Drop-In Center.

Worker's Defense Project

The Worker's Defense Project educates immigrant workers about their legal rights in this country and helps workers recover their stolen wages when employers do not pay them for work performed. Rev. Tom VandeStadt currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Worker's Defense Project.

Equal Justice Center

The Equal Justice Center teaches a legal clinic to law students on worker's legal rights, and offers a number of programs to help low-wage workers defend their workplace rights and recover stolen wages when employers do not pay them for work performed.

Crop Walk

Members of the Congregational Church of Austin participate in the Annual Crop Walk to raise money for local and international hunger relief services. Crop Walk funds assist the Micah 6 Ministry to which our church belongs.

Back Bay Mission, Biloxi Mississippi

The Congregational Church of Austin provides annual financial support to Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi. Back Bay Mission is a leader in economic development, affordable housing construction, and hands-on Christian work camp ministry on the Gulf Coast.

Equal Exchange

The Congregational Church of Austin supports [Equal Exchange](#), an organization that purchases coffee, cocoa, and tea directly from coops around the world at fair and just prices, and then sells it directly to consumers. We sell Equal Exchange products once a month in our fellowship hall after worship.

The Care Communities

The Care Communities provides basic care and assistance to people living with a terminal disease, and our church has a four member "care team" that provides such support. Members of our church sponsor other church members who participate in the annual **Ride for Aids**, a cycling fundraiser that supports The Care Communities

Return Service Requested

Deadline for December Visitor — Nov. 21st

History Corner

This is the second in a series of histories of church members who have been honored with medallions in the stained glass windows in the sanctuary

Mathis Wilhoite Blackstock, M.D. (1925-2012)

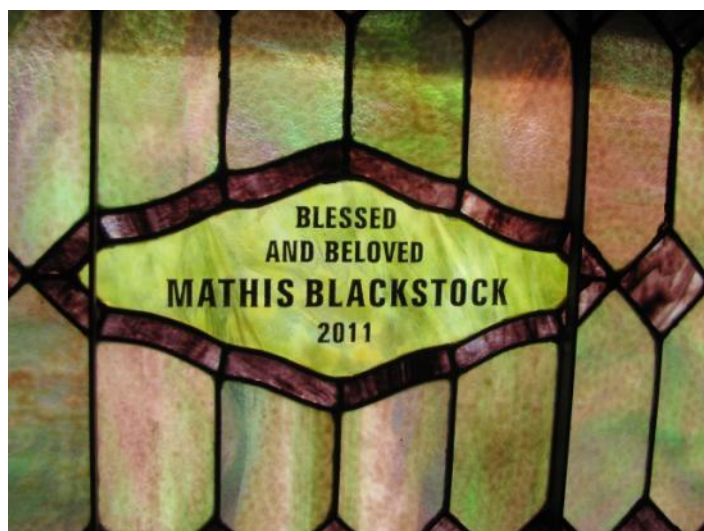
Matt was a treasure of this church and we are still mourning his loss. He was a family practice physician and was beloved in the Austin community.



In 1931 when Matt was about six, his grandmother Barrickman brought Matt and his brother David to the church. He became a lifelong member of the church where he served in many capacities. Matt was actively involved in the creation of “The Raft” in the

church basement which provided overnight stays for runaway teenagers. The only condition imposed was the teenager must call his or her parents at church expense (no cell phones then!). The teens were not required to reveal their location. The church's motives were obvious. In 1970, Matt guided the church through its participation in the es-

tablishment of the **People’s Community Clinic**, again in the basement. Volunteer doctors and nurses provided care for many who fell through the cracks in the health safety network. It is now located in its own building with a large professional paid staff at I-35 and 29th St. Matt was a long-time choir member who also sang in the **Austin Civic Chorus**. A stained-glass medallion in the church was dedicated to him in 2011. His medallion is located on the choir/trio side near a window dedicated by the church to his much-loved grandmother, **Hallie Barrickman**. For more information on Matt--and many more pictures—go to http://www.patandmeloakes.com/CC_of_Austin_Mens_Book_Club/Mathis_W._Blackstock.html.



Medallion on the choir side—Mathis Blackstock. Matt sang in the choir for many, many years.