

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt

Rev. John Towery, Pastor Emeritus

Every year, on the Friday evening before **Easter Sunday**, a small group of us gather in the sanctuary for our Good Friday service. During that service, we extinguish the **Advent** candles that we lit in December one-by-one to symbolize not only the death of Jesus, but the loss of hope, love, peace, and joy that many people experience in this world. Before extinguishing each candle, we read a passage from the 22nd Psalm, because the 22nd Psalm articulates such deep and pervasive human suffering, suffering Jesus himself suffered on the cross.



This year during **Advent**, in addition to traditional Advent readings from the prophets and the gospels, we're reading the same passages from the 22nd Psalm that we read on Good Friday. We're doing this to more closely connect Good Friday and Advent. To dramatize the tension between Good Friday and Advent. The give-and-take. The great reversals that take place between Good Friday and Advent.

If **Good Friday** is the time we reverse **Advent** by extinguishing the candles that have been lit, then Advent is the time we reverse Good Friday by lighting the candles that have been extinguished. But don't think of Good Friday as one day that takes place in the spring, and Advent as four weeks that take place in early winter. Think of Good Friday and Advent as spiritual realities that can take place

any time. Good Friday is any time the light of hope, love, peace, or joy is extinguished. Advent is any time the light of hope, love, peace, or joy is lit. Good Friday and Advent continuously contend with one another. Continuously reverse one another. One extinguishes what the other has lit. One lights what the other has extinguished.

The unlit candles represent the hopeless, the unloved, those in conflict, and those in despair. As we light each candle, we remember just how precious hope is to the hopeless, how precious love is to the unloved, how precious peace is to those in conflict, and how precious joy is to those in despair. We remember that Jesus was born into a world desperately needing hope, love, peace, and joy. And we're reminded that this is our world today.

Hope, love, peace, and joy are only truly precious where they've been extinguished, where they're lacking, where they're desperately needed. Yet wherever hope, love, peace, and joy exist in human life, they're always vulnerable to being snuffed out. How precious indeed is the light.

Let's pray that we may be bearers of the light. That we may tend with great care the flickers of hope, love, peace, and joy burning on the slender wicks of our hearts. And let's pray that like Jesus Christ himself, we may embrace those with unlit wicks and through compassion light a flame within their hearts. Advent isn't so much about lighting unlit candles in church as it is about lighting unlit candles in one another's hearts, and in the hearts of those all around us. Let us tend the light within us, and spread it far and wide.

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS WORSHIP AND ACTIVITIES

December 1, Holy Communion and First Sunday of Advent (hope)
Psalm 22: 6-8
John 1: 6-8; 19-28

December 8, Second Sunday of Advent (love)
Psalm 22: 16-18
Isaiah 40: 1-11

December 15, Third Sunday of Advent (peace), **Children's Christmas Presentation**
Psalm 22: 1
Luke 1: 39-45

December 22, Fourth Sunday of Advent (joy)
Psalm 22: 14-15
Luke 1: 46-55

December 22, **Candlelight Service**, 7:00 pm, followed by **Christmas Party**
Service of lessons and carols followed by Christmas Party hosted by the Oakes.

December 25, **Christmas Service**, 12:00, followed by our **Open Door Dinner**
Brief service of celebration followed by a full-course meal open to all.

December 29, First Sunday after Christmas, with the **Joyful Noise Orchestra**
Luke 2: 1-20

Church Leadership

Trustees Chair	John Goff
Deacons Chair	Jaime Hadley
Outreach Team	Marilyn Vaché Warinda Harris
Moderator	Reuel Nash
Treasurer	David Ross
Financial Secretary	Steve Domingue
Clerk	Betty Bodman
Historian	Jaime Hadley
Web mistress	Sara Ross



Lady Revs X 3--Stephanie Warfield (l), (an Interfaith Minister and friend), who provided the scripture reading and sermon. Newly ordained Jo Jensen (c), and Cecile Adam (r), who provided the "Charge to the Ordinand", standing in front of the prayer net which Jo started at the church several years ago-- each tie represents a prayer.

Personals by Pat Oakes

Jo Jensen wrote on Nov. 18th, "People are still talking. It has been over a week now, yet friends, family and colleagues are still calling, texting, emailing, posting on Facebook, and stopping me to share their experience of the **Congregational Church of Austin**. Sentiments include the intimate feeling that emanates from our beautiful church, the hospitality that radiates from our members, and the extraordinary talent of our choir and trio. Yes, the service of ordination was lovely and the reception food scrumptious and plentiful; however, it was the response to how the attendees felt about being present in our church that caused feelings of pride to well up in me. There were too many meaningful moments during the ordination service to choose one as my favorite. Having my beloved husband place the stole around my neck and share his feelings about our journey together will live forever in my heart. The stole given to me by my husband is titled "Interdependence" which is representative of my theology and made by "In Stitches." That company designs and creates banners for the **UCC's General Synods**. Looking into the eyes of every person as they came forward for Communion and knowing deeply how each one has touched my life was meaningful in profound ways that is truly beyond words. Hearing the choir sing some of my favorite hymns and Amy's solo of the *Prayer of St. Francis* were both mystical and magical. Thank you, Congregational Church of Austin, for welcoming, supporting, encouraging, stretching, and ordaining me on a beautiful sunny November Sunday afternoon. Yes, "God is still speaking," and so are all God's people..." (see photos on pages 3 & 4)

Cathy Hubbs had terrible news from her daughter **Laura** on November 20th. Laura called to tell her that her husband **David** had been killed while crossing a street in an auto--pedestrian accident the evening before. **Dr. David Tait**, was an associate professor of History and Political Science at **Rogers State University** in Oklahoma and a longtime member of the faculty who first came to RSU in 1996. He was a wonderful teacher and a strong advocate for students. In addition to his teaching, he had served as a subdeacon at **St. Elijah Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church** in Oklahoma City since 2005. He is survived by his widow **Dr. Laura Hubbs-Tait** (who grew up in this church), and their sons **Aaron** and daughter **Aidan**. If you would like to send Laura a card, her address is 319 Sycamore Valley Dr., Stillwater, OK, 74074. Cathy, you and the whole family are all in our prayers. You can send a card or note to Cathy at 4100 Jackson Avenue #236, Austin, TX 78731 or give her a call at 512-453-6795.

Beth Gleason (a New Englander through and through) is 3 the coordinator for the Austin chapter of "Red Sox Nation"

and hosted the Red Sox play-off games right through the World Series VICTORY at *Third Base* sports bar. There were over 90 *Red Sox Nation* fans present for the final awesome win against the Cardinals and the whole group celebrated with a spontaneous midnight car parade down Congress, honkin' and hootin' their joy. Go SAWX !

Thaisa Howorth, our former nursery attendant, has safely arrived in Seoul, Korea, where she will be teaching English language classes for a year. You can follow her adventures via her blog, "**Thaisa's Travels**," which is accessible at <http://thaisatravels.wordpress.com/>. She has both video, photos and text—really a fun read, so check it out.

Take a few minutes to welcome **Sarah Fox**, our new child caregiver. Sarah, who is from Corpus Christi, is a senior at UT studying human development and family sciences

While we don't have photographic proof, **Warinda Harris** reports that **William** was **Iron Man** for Halloween, and **Alden** was a frightening ghoul. They had a great time!

Pam, Savanna, and Harrison Tucker had a good time dressing up for **Halloween** this year. Unfortunately, it was the day after the floods in Austin (up to 11 inches in some areas — especially along the **Onion Creek** watershed), so **Alison** was helping friends whose house was flooded get moved up to their house that day, so she didn't dress up. At least they were able to help them. They will be staying with them until their house is finished. That will probably be a few months. At any rate, Halloween was not interrupted for **Cynthia** and **Kitty** and their son, **Carter**, and for **Savanna, Harrison and Pam**.



Pam Tucker as a Halloween scary pig.

Brazos Association News
November
by Liz Nash

I am very pleased to share that three of our **Members in Discernment** were approved by the Brazos Association for ordination at our Association Meeting on Saturday, November 9th. **Janice Kerlee, Ken Ingram, and Jo Jensen** all shared their theological perspectives and faith pilgrimages with depth and sincerity, responding to challenging questions with grace and authenticity.

Rev. Dr. Jo Jensen was ordained on November 10th at the **Congregational Church of Austin**. The service was particularly moving in that Jo was able to give communion for the first time to patients, medical staff, and families of patients she had ministered to over several years as chaplain at Dell Children's Hospital and the Seton Shivers Cancer Center. Jo was endorsed for chaplaincy in the United Church of Christ on November 15th.

Pastor Janice Kerlee will be ordained at **Faith UCC in Bryan** at 3 pm on Sunday, December 8th. Her call is to Compassionate Care Hospice, where she currently serves as a hospice chaplain. Janice's book, *The Chance to Say Goodbye: Hope for Grieving Parents*, shares the experience of the loss of the Kerlees' son, Tim, in the Texas A&M bonfire accident in a way that reaches out to other grieving families. The Kerlees were named Aggie Parents of the Year in 2003-2004 for their work with students.

Ken Ingram will be ordained at **United Christian Church** in Austin at 3 pm on Sunday, January 19th. Ken's call is to chaplaincy at the **Heart Hospital of Austin**, where he currently serves. Ken came to United from

the **Denver** area, and has been part of the planning for the Open and Affirming Convocation for the South Central Conference. He is also part of the youth ministry adult leadership team at United.

At our Association Meeting, we also were blessed to be able to consecrate **David Greer** and **Risa Garza** of **St. John's UCC in Burton** as our newest Licensed Ministers. David and Risa were licensed by our Church and Ministry Committee this past October after a two year period of study and preparation.

Our Association has so much to celebrate this fall! We are honored to have such fine and deeply called people join in Authorized Ministry among us.

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash
Brazos Association Minister



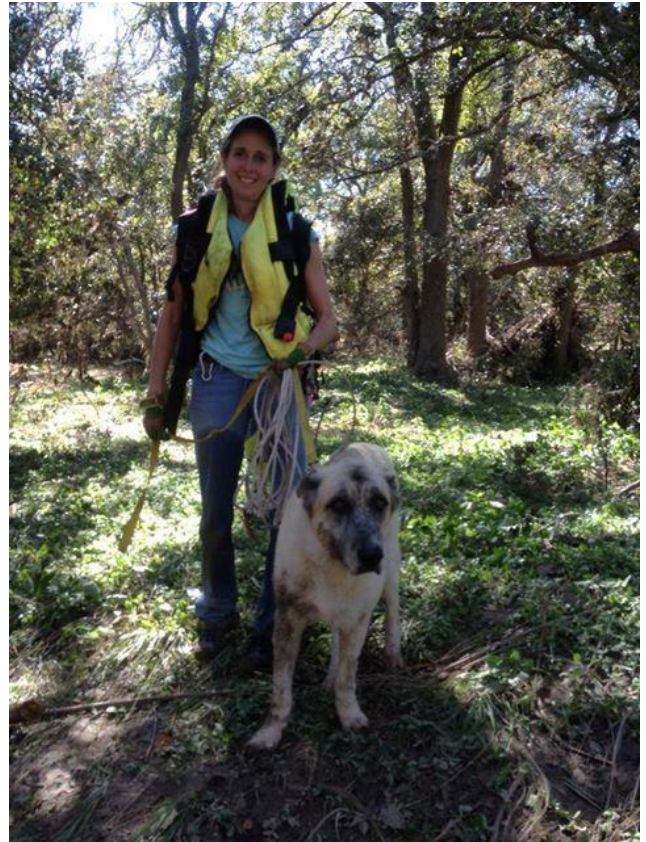
The Cup--Jo Jensen leading her first communion service.



4 Preparing to start Jo Jensen's service of ordination on Nov. 10th.



Savanna Tucker in her Halloween costume as Xena, warrior princess.



Katy Phillips with Ginger, a dog she helped rescue after the Halloween floods on Onion Creek.



Ninjas Harrison Tucker (right) with his friends J W, a neighbor, and 5 year old Carter, whose house got flooded Halloween morning.

The flood also impacted **Katy Phillips**, daughter of Bill and Betty Phillips. Katy (who years ago played the cello in our trio) is the **Director of Public Works** at Sunset Valley. She helped to pull a dog named **Ginger** out of a rushing creek during recent rescue operations of the Halloween day flood in the area of **Onion Creek**. Happily, Ginger was reunited with her owner. It had been hanging on to a branch and had been treading water for several hours. After Katy and another worker got Ginger hoisted up the face of a cliff, the dog was reunited with its owner at the command post. There were all too few moments when their efforts turned out to be as rewarding as that one was. Bill, Betty, and Katy were fortunate that they did not have water damage, but they did have neighbors who reported water coming into their homes. Katy's dad Bill says, "The really sad thing about that flood was that it was devastating for so many poor families that lived along Onion Creek; also, many beautiful horses were drowned and lives were lost.

Lucy Hanouille reports that **Tapestry Singers** will give a free concert of Christmas music at the Capitol rotunda Saturday, December 7th at noon. The sound there is absolutely fabulous! Please come and join them.

Jason Quisenberry celebrated his 40th birthday on November 14th. In the first photo he does not know that a surprise party is waiting for him behind the front door! **Mary**

Continued on page 6



Juliet and Scarlett with dad Jason and Mom Shannon Quisenberry at Jason's 40th birthday party.

Ann Quisenberry, grandmother to the Quisenberry twins, celebrated her 80th birthday in a grand weekend celebration in Michigan this October. **Scarlett** and **Juliet** joined their cousins to add one of many Irish components to the night: Irish Step Dancing!



Juliet and Scarlett Quisenberry ready to Irish step dance for their grandmother's 80th birthday.

Paul Deisler writes that on Sunday, November 10, he was one of twenty-one new members welcomed into the congregation of The Unitarian-Universalist Church of Corpus Christi, Texas. He says, "My wife, Ellen, had been raised as a Unitarian and we had been married by a Unitarian pastor in Denver, Colorado. Part way to Unitarianism, I, raised in old-time Christianity, was not yet willing to relin-

quish certain Christian tenets. Ellen deferred to me and we reached what proved to be a very happy compromise in Congregationalism, one that lasted all of our married life and beyond. Ellen's long descent toward her death in September 2011 and my own increasing health problems kept me from going to church, something I missed deeply. However, my primary desire was to be with Ellen as much as possible but she was unable to attend services. I stayed with her. Now I have seen nothing but obstacles to returning to church attendance, especially during my long, recent hospitalization, slow and continuing recovery and with an uncertain future. Obstacles are made to be overcome and I now look forward to Sundays as I have in the past. There is a perfectly good UCC church in Corpus Christi but, realizing how far my pilgrimage had taken me toward the Unitarian church's philosophy, I decided to give Unitarianism a try. I soon concluded I had reached the end of my trail, having found my ultimate church home. Last March I became a "true blue UU" and have been formally welcomed into membership this month. All of this means, simply, that I wish my relationship with the CCA (UCC) to change from 'Out of Town Member' to that of 'Friend of the CCA.' I have too much of me invested in the CCA and the UCC and too much gratitude toward both institutions to want to break or even seriously bend the tie that binds." Paul adds, "As a friend of the CCA, I intend to send a gift to the CCA each year and to contribute to activities as they come to my attention. For example, such activities would include supporting mission trips, supporting **Back Bay Mission** (a very worthy cause) or Tom's ride for AIDS (I hope Tom's legs hold out!)." We are glad you have found a new church home, Paul, and they are lucky you found them. We hope to see you over the Christmas holidays in Austin.

Last month, **Marilyn Gaddis** and **George Carruthers** (members we don't see very often since they live in San Marcos) took a three week trip to the Pacific Northwest to celebrate George's 90th birthday. Before boarding the Amtrak "Empire Builder" in **Minneapolis**, they visited with Marilyn's UW-Eau Claire friends. Arriving in **Spokane**, they joined a Road Scholar program. It was off to **Lewis-ton** to embark on the **National Geographic "Sea Bird"** for a cruise on the **Snake** and **Columbia Rivers**. At **Clarkston**, they rode the **Hell's Canyon** rapids in a jet boat and viewed the colorful basalt formations along the way. Outside **The Dalles**, the group visited the **Maryhill Museum** with its eclectic collection of paintings, furniture, sculptures, and pottery. Traveling the **Columbia River Gorge**, the group stopped see a lovely new sculpture of **Sacagawea** with "Pomp" on her back and the dog, "Seaman" by her side. They also viewed **Multnomah Falls**. To travel through the **Bonneville Lock**, Marilyn and George opted to ride in a **Zodiak** along side the "Sea Bird!" In Astoria, the group toured the reconstructed **Fort Clatsop** where Lewis & Clark had spent the winter. (Part



Marilyn Gaddis and George Carruthers on their recent trip to the Northwest.



Mel and Pat Oakes with daughter Sarah and her husband Joe Pierce at the Kennedy Center on Nov. 1st.

of the journey of the "Corps of Discovery.") In the **Columbia River Maritime Museum**, George discovered that in the 1950s his relative(?), **Eben Carruthers**, had invented a machine that cut tuna loins into a uniform size for canning. The machine is still used worldwide. After disembarking the ship in Portland, it was off on Amtrak to visit Marilyn's niece and family in Olympia, where it was rainy and cold. They did venture out to the Northwest Trek Wildlife Park and took the tram to see the large animals. Then it was back on Amtrak for the homeward journey, stopping briefly in Eugene to visit Marilyn's 96 year old cousin. Yes, they did see snow in the **Sierras** and the **Rockies!**

Former member **Mary Sinclair** wrote from **Heidelberg, Ontario**, upon receipt of an e-mail requesting news which also pointed out that the first real cold front of the year was arriving said, "Don't make me laugh. We've already had snow!! I do miss Austin winters (but not the summers)."

Mel and Pat Oakes had a marvelous ten day visit with their daughter Sarah and her husband Joe in Arlington, Virginia. They timed their trip over two weekends so that there was time to play then and Pat and Mel could visit friends in the area and work on projects around their home. Both Pat and Mel have cousins there, so it was good to catch up on family stories. The week they were there the leaves turned glorious reds and golds. They enjoyed their grandcat **Quarter**, went to the ballet ("Giselle") at the Kennedy Center, had a behind the scenes tour of the **National Archives** in College Park, Maryland, given by a friend from Austin, visited the postal museum, shopped at two farmer's markets, and walked on the National Mall to the **WWII** memorial and the **MLK** memorial.

If Your Heart Is Called to Mission . . .

Save the last week in **January 2014** for a Texas **Mission Trip to El Salvador** Saturday, January 25 - Saturday, February 1, 2014. Join a group of dedicated, long term UCC volunteers working with the rural poor in the mountains of El Salvador. Led by El Salvadoran community activists....

We work shoulder-to-shoulder with the Salvadoran people.... building basic housing in the mountain community of Alegria. The trip is in communion with UCC pastors and lay people from around the country.

Fly from Dallas or Houston to El Salvador...basic lodging & local food keep the costs low. Contact Rev. Dr. Liz Nash at lizknash@gmail.com or Beth Gleason at hiregleason@hotmail.com

Past CCA members **Felicia Scott** and **Robynne Heymans** have attended in recent years. **Liz Nash** has gone four years in a row and this will be **Beth Gleason's** second trip. Liz and Beth are both deeply committed to forming a non-profit on this side of the border to support the rural cooperative in **Alegria** and future UCC mission trip from the South Central Conferences. **Liz and Beth are going to do a home-made pie fundraiser on Sunday, Dec. 8, selling all kinds of yummy pies to raise money for the trip.**

What they mean by "raising money for the trip" is that they take cash in-country with them to buy the construction supplies necessary for the projects they work on all week, as well as to hire local trades people to supervise them as they work (laying brick, mixing cement etc). The goal is to raise \$1,000 - it goes directly towards the projects and the people of Alegria (participants pay their own expenses).

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

Return Service Requested

Deadline for January Visitor — December 23rd

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF AUSTIN, UCC Financial Pledge – 2014

Our church is a community of people responding to Jesus' call to follow him. Opening ourselves to and living in the spirit of God, we are engaged in the ongoing project of creating a community that liberates, heals, reconciles, pursues justice, and promotes peace.

Stewardship is the means through which we participate in the ongoing creation of this community. The more we discern, open ourselves to, and live in God's spirit, the more God's grace is manifested in and through us.

Our church budget reflects our financial commitment to the ongoing creation of this liberating, healing, reconciling, justice-seeking, peace-promoting community of Jesus' disciples that we call the Congregational Church of Austin, United Church of Christ.

Discerning Jesus Christ's call to me while reflecting on my commitment to the on-going creation of the Congregational Church of Austin, UCC, and taking stock of my financial resources, I am prepared to pledge the following amount for the ongoing work of the church in 2014.

Please circle one

_____ **per week** **per month** **per year**

Signature: _____