

# THE VISITOR

January 2018

**The Congregational Church of Austin    United Church of Christ**

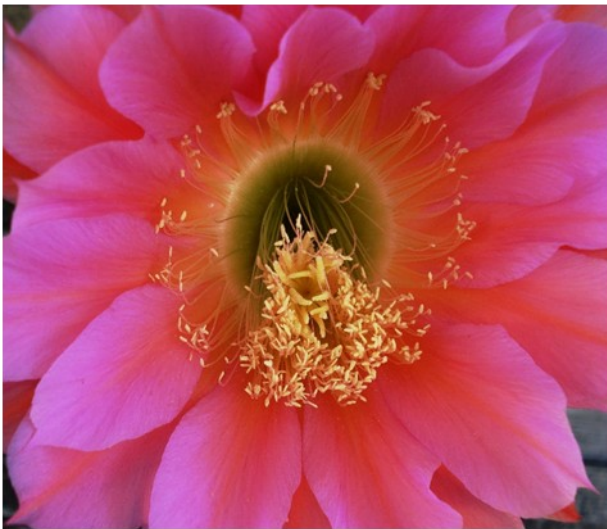
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**Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt**



**T**here's a long spiritual tradition within Christianity that uses the language of Beauty to talk about God. Roman Catholic scholar and author, John O'Donohue, most succinctly put it this way, "the other name of God is beauty." Within this tradition, people recognize the divine, the holy, the sacred not only in beauty, but as beauty.

What is beauty? Because beauty is "the other name for God," folks in this tradition don't pin beauty down with definitions, just as they don't pin God down with definitions. Nevertheless, beauty does have some recognizable traits.

When someone lives and grows naturally, according to one's deepest and truest nature, fulling one's deepest and truest potential, going with the grain of reality instead of against it,

one is being beautiful. One is embodying beauty in one's life, creating beauty with one's life.

Freedom is beautiful. The freedom to live and grow according to one's nature, to fulfill one's deepest, truest potential. But support is also beautiful. The support one needs to live, to grow, to fulfill one's potential. When someone does something to support and sustain another, that act is beautiful.

Beauty is dignity, integrity, truthfulness, humility, grace, and maturity. Even with our flaws, our wounds, our scars, our insecurities, and our egos, beauty can shine through us. Indeed, the recognition and humble acceptance of our imperfection, and the forgiving acceptance of other people's imperfections, are beautiful traits.

Beauty is balance and harmony within relationships. Systems that successfully balance an individual's needs with the well-being of the whole are beautiful. Justice is beautiful. Economic justice, political justice, gender justice, racial justice, sexual-orientation justice, all forms of justice.

We can clarify beauty a bit more by asking, what is ugly?

Living a distorted life, a life that doesn't fulfill our deepest and truest potential. Living a lie. Not growing up, not maturing. Not being dignified, integrated, truthful, humble, and graceful. Being dominated. Dominating others. Not being supported. Not supporting others. Relationships and systems that are out-of-balance, that breed disharmony and conflict, that are unhealthy and unwholesome. Injustice, in all its forms.

That's as far as I'll go to pin beauty down. I'm sure you get the picture.

(cont. on p. 2)

(cont. from p. 1)

John's Gospel uses the imagery of light and darkness to set up a contrast between the holy and the unholy, the wholesome and the unwholesome, that which gives life and that which harms life, love and hate, wisdom and ignorance. But John could've just as easily used the imagery of beauty and ugliness. Beauty is holy, wholesome, life-giving, loving, and wise. Ugliness is unholy, unwholesome, harmful, hateful, and ignorant.

Or, more radically, John could've written in his prologue, in the beginning was Beauty. Beauty was with God. Beauty was God. And Beauty became flesh, entering this world as the Beautiful human.

We're disciples of Jesus, the Beautiful human. And we follow the Beautiful human by seeking to be as beautiful as we can be on any given day, in any given moment, with any given person, in any given circumstance. We follow the Beautiful human by seeking to support others in being as beautiful as they can be, and by co-creating beautiful relationships with other people.

Yes, we're all imperfect. We all have some ugly sides. We all fall into an ugly mood from time to time. We say and do some ugly things. But recognizing this, and seeking to make amends, is beautiful. So is forgiving others for their ugly sides and moods, for the ugly things they may say or do.

That's life. A dance between light and darkness, beauty and ugliness. We're not all one or the other. But Jesus Christ, the Beautiful human, seeks to keep us focused on the light, on the beauty, so we can transform darkness into light, ugliness into beauty.

As imperfect humans who follow the Beautiful human, may we seek on-going transformation in our own lives, may we support one another's transformation, and may we transform this world in which we live with Christ's light and beauty.

TOM

## February Visitor Deadline—Jan. 26, 2018

### Church Leadership

Trustee Chair	Don Brown
Deacons Chair	Betty Bodman
Outreach Team	Whit Bodman
Moderator	John Goff
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Pam Tucker
Christian Education	Lynne Lemley
Youth Sunday School	
Coordinator	John Burlinson
Clerk	Jaime Hadley
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Webmistresses:	Shannon Quisenberry, Sara Ross
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

**Personals**  
by Pat Oakes

Our church family is mourning the loss of our dear friend **Joe McMillan** (Joseph Turner McMillan, Jr.) who died of heart failure at Christopher House here in Austin on December 12, 2017. Joe joined our church in 1988 when he came here from New York to take the position of President of Huston-Tillotson College (now University). He served in that capacity until 2000. Joe was an ac-

where his father was a minister. For more information and photos of Joe, see the **History Corner** at the end of this Visitor.

The church youth group ( a joint Christmas effort with University Christian and our church) raised a total of **\$1850** and served twenty-two families for their Christmas project. The money came from the amazing pumpkin raffle/auction and donations. Thanks to **Reuel Nash**, sponsor, and our church's **Savanna Tucker, Harrison Tucker, and Alden Harris** who actively participated. (see photos below.)

**December 17** was a festive day at the church. In addition to the morning service where everyone enthusiastically sang “Jesus. Oh What A Wonderful Child!” with the rousing accompaniment of our trio, that evening was the traditional candlelight carol service followed by a delightful Christmas party in the fellowship hall. A great joy at the carol service was the presence of many of the Towery family including **Mary Towery Masters** (Danny had to be out of town), their son **Ricky** and his wife **Monica** and their daughters **Agnes** and **Clara**, **Ches** and **Maggie Towery**, their daughter **Krystal Towery** and her friend **Frank**. Folks brought their favorite Christmas treats to share and **Jason Parkhill** was the eggnog master.



Joe McMillan on one of his last visits to the church on March 19, 2017.

tive Deacon, serving several terms as chair, and he sang in the choir for many years. Joe’s health had not been good for the past several years, so we had not seen a lot of him since his bout with cancer. He was born in Georgia on July 19, 1944, and lived most of his early life in Winston-Salem, North Carolina,



Harrison Tucker shopping for needy families for Christmas



Alden Harris having fun while shopping for needy families for Christmas.



Savanna Tucker helping to brighten needy families' Christmases.

## Heart of Texas Association News

December

by Liz Nash

Our churches have a great and admirable diversity of practices that I am privileged to witness. On Tuesday, December 12th, I attended the annual United Methodist charge conference meeting for Rolling Hills Community Church in Lago Vista. We have several Association churches that are dually affiliated with other denominations, but Rolling Hills is unusual, having a formal affiliation with four denominations: United Methodist, Presbyterian Church USA, Christian Church/Disciples of Christ, and UCC. Churches that are part of the United Methodist Church have, as part of their wider church accountability, a charge conference meeting each year that includes a formal meeting of the church leadership/council with a representative of the District Superintendent. In the charge conference meetings I have attended at the church over the years, up to date financial statements, updated membership information, current mission activity, and reports on many aspects of church life are presented, along with reports from the minister(s). Although I am not familiar with all of the formal aspects of the meeting in United Methodist polity (governance), I would explain it as a time for the church to take a good, honest look at itself and at its life of faith as part of the annual renewal of what we in the UCC would call church standing or the church's covenant with the wider denomination. Although we have a different polity than the United Methodists, I find these meetings to be an excellent chance to understand the ongoing ministry and life of Rolling Hills.

I share this experience, which is also part of the life of Trinity Church of Austin, both because it is a way of knowing something about our brothers and sisters beyond our own congregations and because it is an illustration of the many ways we are faithful followers of Christ. Our Association churches vary in how we organize ourselves, how we worship, how we do

Christian Education, what missions and justice work we pursue -- in almost every area of church life, we each have our own ways. When something isn't working, I also find that people often don't turn to the churches with whom we are in covenant for ideas. But we have a rich well to draw from when we come to know each other. I encourage the sharing and partnership that can make our lives as churches richer as followers of Christ. I also encourage the honesty, openness, and willingness to see a full picture of our ministry that I have witnessed at these meetings.

As of early December, the **Heart of Texas Greg Felder Memorial Scholarship** account had \$800 in donations. We encourage our churches and individuals to continue to build this fund. We already have eligible recipients and want to encourage more to go forward with training for licensed ministry and work, as licensed ministers are called to do so, toward ordained ministry. Contact our Association treasurer, Joe Ward, at [Astrocat48@twc.com](mailto:Astrocat48@twc.com) to donate.

Our brother in Christ, **Joe McMillan**, died on December 12th. Joe was the president of Huston-Tillotson University in Austin, a UCC related school, from 1988-2000. Before that, he worked in the national UCC office to as the Secretary for Higher Education of the UCC Board for Homeland Ministries. Joe was a longtime member of the Congregational Church of Austin, and contributed both to the church and the wider community in Austin in many ways. A memorial service will be held for him at the Huston-Tillotson Chapel on Saturday, January 13th, with the time tentatively set at 11 am. Our prayers are with Joe's family and friends.

Blessings in Christ,  
Liz Nash, Association Minister

## Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes



The Parkhill family and Debby Kohrt had a great time at the church Christmas party after the candlelight carol service--Jason and Kristen, grandmother Debby, Caleb, and Zoey—all wearing holiday necklaces given by Debby

The Joyful Noise Orchestra played for the Christmas Eve day service on the 24th. **Nodie Murphy**,



The Joyful Noise Orchestra rehearsing for the Christmas Eve Day service --Nodie Murphy, Sara Ross, Norma Hawes, Edgar Cavazos, Andy Ross, Dave Ross, Rambie Briggs, Jonathan Geer, Chencho Flores, Katie Lemley, and Fran Briggs.

flute, **Sara Ross**, viola, **Norma Hawes** and **Edgar Cavazos** on guitar, **Andy Ross**, oboe, and his dad **Dave**, recorder, **Rambie Briggs**, accordion, **Jonathan Geer**, piano, and **Fran Briggs**, clarinet, made a joyful noise indeed!

Chief Christmas elf in charge of the Christmas dinner for the homeless, **Reuel Nash** says, “ To all who cooked, served, carved, ran up and down the stairs, dealt with trash and recycling, or helped in any other way Thank you!” Reuel reports that there were twenty-eight volunteers who helped and about 140 folks who came through the door for a delicious Christmas dinner.



Some of the Christmas dinner helpers--Cindy Locke, Reuel Nash, Dennis Murphy, Bill Beardall, and Hector Gonzales.



Joy Penticuff, Tom VandeStadt, Jaime Hadley, and René Slataper taking a brief break during preparations for the church Christmas dinner for the homeless.

In December of 2016, **Carol Barrett** retired from full time work as a City Planner. Her career spanned more than 42 years and covered geography on the East Coast, California, and Texas. During 2017, she worked as a consultant on how city planning agencies can be more efficient advising clients on the East Coast, California, and Texas. She served as the President of the California Planning Foundation for several years raising funds for academic scholarships for planning students. She also worked as a volunteer for a couple of community agencies. Her favorite was Fruit Forward which marshalls volunteers to pick produce from the lush fruit trees in people's backyards and donates the produce to food banks and to homeless shelter kitchens. Her last three months in California were the most rewarding as she served as Interim Pastor for her church: San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ while the settled pastor was on sabbatical. Carol moved back to Austin in November and the family celebrated with a Disney cruise. A good time was had by all, especially grandboys Kai (age 5) and **Drake** (age 3). For Christmas, it's back to California where all the Texas Barretts (including eldest son



Carol Barrett back in Austin with her darling grandboys Kai and Drake.

**Craig** and his family) will join the California Barretts. Son **Whitney** promises to fly in from Switzerland so a jolly holiday is anticipated. Carol's plans for 2018 include continuing her consulting as well as her work teaching and writing about planning ethics. She is delighted to see so many familiar faces at church.

**Stephanie Phillips** (eldest daughter of Bill and Betty) is running as a Democrat for Texas House District 73.

It represents Comal, Kendal, and Gillespie counties. The cities are New Braunfels, Boerne, Canyon Lake, and Fredricksburg. There has been a big push to make sure that people filed for offices where there has been no opposition for years. Stephanie thought long and hard and decided to throw her hat into the ring. Stephanie asks that folks like her Facebook page ( Stephanie Phillips for Texas House 73) or if you would like to donate, you can send your donations to her campaign at PO Box 2406 Canyon Lake, TX 78133. Also, be sure and let your friends who live in the district that you know a good candidate. Incidentally, years ago the Congregational Church of Austin cornered the market on the best high school violists in AISD—**Lana Harris, Will Taylor, Beth Oakes, and Stephanie Phillips!** All four are still involved with music.

Longtime members of the congregation remember the **Tomasek** family. **Jim** was the South Central Conference Minister for the UCC and served in that capacity for twenty years. Jim, his wife **Mary**, and children **Dorcas** and **Mark** were part of our church family. Sadly, Jim died of Parkinson's disease in 2005. **Rollin Russell** served as Associate Conference Minister with Jim for a number of years until the Russell family moved to North Carolina where Rollin became UCC



Selfie master Stephen Russell took this picture of himself with old friend Dorcas Tomasek while visiting Dorcas and her mom Mary Tomasek here in Austin.

conference minister in Burlington in 1982. When Rollin and Betsy were back in town for a visit with their son Stephen over Thanksgiving, they decided they would try to get in touch in with Mary Tomasek. Thanks to social media, Stephen contacted Dorcas on Facebook—thinking she was still in Florida where she worked as a camp director for 20 years at

## Personals (cont. from p. 6)

Paul Newman's camps for children with special needs. She had changed jobs four years ago to do similar work for Redwood Groups (central office in Morrisville, North Carolina, which allows her to work remotely. Six months ago Dorcas moved back to Austin and is living with Mary! So, Stephen, Betsy, and Rollin had a great visit with them both. They report that Mary looks great and is very happy to have Dorcas at home. She sends greeting to friends at the Congregational Church of Austin. Dorcas said they think about going to church, but getting around is difficult for Mary as she needs a wheelchair. We hope they will make use of our relatively new ramp for easier access and we hope to see them soon!

## History Corner

As you can see, Joe McMillan was quite active in many aspects of the church. Along with Joe you will see the faces and names of many who were active with him—and some of us are still around! If you would like to know more about Joe, go to <http://server16.websitehostserver.net/~patandme/CCAHistory/>



Jan 7, 2001 Dick Jackson, Joe McMillan, Jim and Mary Tomasek at Pastor Yoshi Kaneda's retirement party



May 14, 2006 Betty Bodman, Joe McMillan, Suzanne Vanderpoel, Dave Ross, Lois and John Drachenberg, Alex Vandestadt at a celebration at Vic Appel's home.



Easter 2001 Joe McMillan and Rich Thompson, interim pastor, at the Easter sunrise service on Mount Bonnell.



Oct. 6, 2008 Vic Appel, Joe McMillan, Matt Blackstock, and Nancy Brown



Dec. 9, 2007 Jaden Joseph Maynard's christening —Tabia Ellis and her daughter Maryam Krob, and Joe's sister Pamela Maynard, Aunt Cora Gordon, godfather Joe McMillan, Jaden Joseph Maynard and his mother Kaia Maynard.



Dec. 9, 2009 Nodie Murphy conducts Joe McMillan, Amy Harris, Barbara Burnham, Fran Briggs, Beth Gleason, Dennis Murphy, Michael Ross (hidden behind Rambie) Rambie Briggs, and Sara Ross.

## History Corner *(cont. from p. 7)*



Feb. 5, 2010 Before the talent show, Norma Hawes and Joe McMillan enjoyed great soup--ARRRRGH



August 22, 2010 Joe McMillan, Sara Ross, Joe's sister Pamela Maynard, and Joe's friend Jock Campbell.



Feb. 13, 2011 The choir singing a commissioned anthem written to honor Matt Blackstock. The choir back-l-r Chester Rosson, Bill Mueller, Don Miles, Dennis Murphy, Norma Hawes, Rambi Briggs, Sara Ross, Joe McMillan; front--Becky Ellis, Betty Phillips, Cathy Hubbs, and Amy Harris, conducted by Nodie Murphy. Andy Strietelmeier with the violin.



March 4, 2011 Choir for the talent show--Norma Hawes, Betty Phillips, Chester Rosson, Fran Briggs, Talley Summerlin, Lucy Hanouille (now Lucy Erda), Joe McMillan, Dennis and Nodie Murphy.



March 10, 2013 Sharon Brown was among the folks in the congregation who welcomed Joe McMillan back the Sunday after his heart attack.



The flowering of the cross, Easter, March 31, 2013. Choir--Cathy Hubbs, Don Miles, Greg Futch, Dennis Murphy, Sara Ross, Joe McMillan, Nodie Murphy, and Barbara Burnham.