

THE VISITOR

September 2018

The Congregational Church of Austin, United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt



I read about “the new normal” a lot this summer. In July, *The New York Times* published an article calling the wild-fires ravaging the west like out-of-control monsters the new normal. In the piece, one fire fighter declared that big fires burning in early July were the new normal. Another claimed fires shouldn’t be so ferocious that early in the summer, and that fires were behaving different than in years past. A local resident said, we’ve never seen fires like this. Ever.

What’s normal? Right now, normal is seeing things that aren’t normal. Seeing things behave in ways we’ve never seen before. Ever. Normal is continuous change towards greater extremes.

That’s Crystal Kolden’s view of climate change and fire. A fire scientist at the University of Idaho, she’s critical of the term new normal. “It sounds like we left the old normal, the old conditions, and arrived at a new normal, a new stasis,” she says. “Unfortunately, that’s not what our climate projections are telling us. They’re telling us that this is one step on a very long staircase that’s heading toward extreme conditions.”

Heat waves and drought baking and drying the earth, arctic ice and mountain glaciers melting, oceans heating up and rising, fires becoming more enormous and destructive—just one step on a staircase heading toward extreme conditions.

And we’re not standing still on that staircase. We’re quickening our pace. Five scientists recently published an article in *Nature Communications* warning that accelerated warming in the Arctic could lead to “very extreme extremes” of abnormally high temperatures in Europe, the US, Russia, and China.

If we’re experiencing abnormal extremes now in the new normal, and we’re heading toward more extreme extremes, accelerating as we go, then we better take our next step very carefully. And each step after that.

“So be scrupulously watchful of how you walk.” That’s how David Bentley Hart translates a passage from the *Letter to the Ephesians* that other versions of the Bible translate, “Be careful then how you live.” Either way, that’s what’s called for today. Living very carefully. Being scrupulously watchful of our every step. Or as the Buddha taught with his final words, “Things fall apart, tread the path with care.”

Be careful. Be scrupulously watchful. Care matters. Because care reveals who and what matters to us. And who and what doesn’t matter.

We care for people who matter to us. It matters to us if they’re happy or sad, healthy or ill, well-fed or hungry, safe or in danger. We may or may not know these people personally, but they matter to us. We care for them.

And when people matter to us, we’re careful. We treat them carefully, and live carefully so as not to harm them. We’re aware of how our words and actions affect them, and considerate of their needs. We offer to help them when they’re in trouble, and we’re conscientious, meticulous, and thorough when doing things for them.

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The same goes for other living beings, objects, and the earth itself. We care for what matters to us, and we're careful with what matters to us. Both the Christian and the Buddhist spiritual traditions teach that being caring and careful are eminently important spiritual practices. Which is to say, who and what matters to us is of great spiritual concern. Just as who and what doesn't matter is of great spiritual concern.

The fate of the earth depends on who and what matters to us, how careful we are, how scrupulously we watch our step. If other people, non-human life-forms, and the integrity of earth's bio-systems don't matter to us, if we're not careful with them, we'll continue to harm them and lose them at an accelerating pace. The fate of the earth is of great spiritual concern, it matters, and it calls for an intentional spiritual practice of care. And as we head toward more extreme extremes, we'll need to practice more extreme extremes of care.

That's what it will take—people practicing a spirituality of extreme extremes of care, where every person, living being, and bio-system *really matters*. Where every ounce of fossil fuel that's burned or left in the ground *really matters*. Where every tree that's planted, chopped down, or burned *really matters*. Where every drop of water that's used wisely or wasted *really matters*. Where every morsel of food, and how it's produced, *really matters*. Where everything one buys, consumes, throws away, and recycles *really matters*.

That's what it will take if we have any hope at all—a spirituality of extreme care, in which people scrupulously watch *everything* they do to see how it impacts the earth, because *everything* they do matters.

Yes, it sounds extreme. But then again, it's the new normal.

Tom

October Visitor Deadline—September 24, 2018

Church Leadership

Trustee Chair	Keith Beresheim
Deacons Chair	Barbara Burnham
Outreach Team	Whit Bodman
Moderator	John Goff
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Bryan Rutherford
Christian Education	Lynne Lemley
Coordinators	Shaela Rutherford
Youth Sunday School	Sam Clubb (Acting)
Clerk	Jaime Hadley
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Webmaster	Mel Oakes
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

Heart of Texas Association News August

by Liz Nash

All of you are invited to the Heart of Texas Association Fall Meeting to be held on Saturday, October 20th at United Christian Church, 3500 West Parmer Lane, in Austin -- near the intersection of Parmer Lane and the MoPac freeway (TX-1). The meeting will start at 11 am, with registration beginning at 10:30. We will break for lunch then continue, ending between about 1:30 and 2 pm. An ecclesiastical council for **Will Nelson**, candidate for ordained ministry pending a call, will be held during our gathering. Will is a member of Church of the Savior and graduated from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. His ordination paper will be sent out to our churches and ministers in early October. We encourage all who come to read it, to be enriched in your thinking about faith by it, and to bring questions you may have for **Will**. At our meeting, we will also worship together, enjoy table fellowship at lunch, have a business meeting, and have an additional program that is still being worked out. Come to enjoy the friendship of those from our churches, to build our caring covenantal relationships among our churches, and to contribute to the important work of the ordained ministry process. United is hosting the meeting on behalf of the Austin area cluster of Association churches, and we anticipate gathering in the South Texas cluster of churches in the spring.

The fall meeting offering will be for Slumber Falls Camp. As many of you know, the camping and retreat ministry at Slumber Falls is an invaluable and irreplaceable blessing to those of us who are in the South Central Conference of the UCC.

In an era of constant busyness, time demands, and the push to achieve and compete for so many of our youth, Slumber Falls Camp is a life-giving and Spirit-filled place. It is a place where children and youth are loved for who they are and where caring staff come to help foster faithful Christian lives full of meaning and hope. I can testify personally to the treasure that our UCC church camps are from my own experience while living in Northern California and the enormous impact the UCC camping program there has had over the years on the lives of our three daughters. I know from the witness of so many here that Slumber Falls has had this same kind of impact on the lives of our children and youth. I also know how important this camp is in the lives of adults in our churches as we have been refreshed and renewed there at retreats and as camp counselors and directors. Right now, Slumber Falls has financial need in various ways. The camp has been given a donation of 128 Tempurpedic mattresses, with the only cost being \$7000 for mattress delivery. Some of this money has been raised as I write, but more is needed. And the camp needs our donations for all of its work to ensure that it is sustainable into the future. Our Association offering will go toward the mattresses as needed, with any additional money going to the overall work and program. I encourage our churches and members to be generous, too, with your gifts from church budgets and as Friends of the Camp.

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash, Association Minister

Worship Gifts for Summer 2018

What a delightful and varied selection of worship gifts enriched our summer church services! In June **Barbara Burnham** introduced us to the Linus Project, a program that provides blankets for children in crisis. Then **Dennis Murphy** shared some treasures from his days as a graduate student, when he studied Caedmon's Hymn. **Lucy Erda** opened her heart to tell us how faith and community have supported her in the grieving process.

July brought gifts of music as **Jonathan Geer**, joined by **Amy Harris** and **Tony Rogers**, presented the lovely "Ave Maria" he had written for his marriage ceremony this past spring. **Bill Beardall** gave us a rousing rendition of "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," complete with "Ebenezer." **Sarah Darter** ("Reverend Silly") donned her clown regalia and entertained us with spiritual tricks. Ruth gathered a troupe of participants to present a reading of '**Langston Hughes**' poem, "Let America Be America Again."

August brought us a mixed blessing as **Linnaea Arnett** sang "Home," celebrating her welcome at our church as she was leaving Austin to follow her life's path. Then **Shaela** and **Bryan Rutherford**, **Sarah Darter** and **Jonathan Zercher** enlivened our hymn sing with an energetic gospel quartet version of "Somebody's Knocking at Your Door" from our new Glory to God hymnal.

There are still many gifts awaiting us. **Beth Placek** will celebrate the repair of her knee and her return to joyful movement as soon as possible, and several poets, readers and photographers hover in the wings. We are so fortunate to have members and friends willing to share their talents and insights with us. Thank you to those who gave the gifts and to those who gratefully received them.

Nodie Murphy

Personals by Pat Oakes

It is with great sadness that we report the death of **Betty Appel** (1923-2018) on Aug. 15. She and longtime member **Vic Appel** married in February 2010 at the church and enjoyed more than 8 years of happiness together. Recently **Betty** fell twice within a few weeks and broke first one hip and then the other. At almost 95 years of age, she was not a candidate for surgery. Her passing was quiet and peaceful with loved ones around her. Her amazing life was celebrated at a lovely memorial service on Aug. 25th at Westlake Hills United Methodist Church where she was a member of the church and a member of the choir. We all knew she loved to sing and she had a beautiful soprano voice which she shared with us at talent shows and as worship gifts.



2/5/2010 Betty Appel singing "He Keeps Me Singing" at the church talent show.

We learned that often **Betty** and **Vic** would go to two church services on a Sunday—one at our church and one at Westlake. **Betty** was an early stewardess for United and Continental airlines. While a single mother of 4 little girls, juggling a variety of jobs, she earned her undergraduate degree and went on to earn four master's degrees in education, special education, and marriage and family counseling. Sadly, **Vic**, whom **Betty** called the love of her life, was unable to attend the memorial service. On the Wednesday evening before the Saturday afternoon service, **Vic** developed a blood clot and was immediately taken to the Dell Seton emergency room where he had surgery right away. Daughter **Debbie** arrived on Friday, the 24th and daughter **Cheryl** arrived on Saturday. **Debbie** represented the Appel family at the service while **Cheryl** stayed with her dad at the hospital. Our church family was well represented at the service by **Tom VandeStadt** and **Robin Chapman**, **Sarah Darter**, **Stephen Russell**, **Dave** and **Sara Ross**, **Nodie** and **Dennis Murphy**, and **Pat** and **Mel Oakes**. For the time being, **Vic** will be at home at Legacy Oaks, 7501 West Hwy 290, Apt. 103, Austin, Texas 78736 and would enjoy receiving cards and letters.



8/25/18 A gathering of folks from our church at Westlake Hills United Methodist Church for Betty Appel's memorial service-- Nodie Murphy, Debbie Appel, Sarah Darter, Sara and Dave Ross, Dennis Murphy

Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes

There is some wonderful news for all of us--**Amelia Fulbright** (who was our interim pastor last summer while **Tom** was on sabbatical) and her husband **Jonathan Zercher** and daughter **Vivienne**, 3, are expecting a baby brother for **Vivienne** on **Amelia's** 41st birthday—Feb. 23rd, 2019. After a miserable first 3 months, **Amelia** is now feeling much better and was in good form to celebrate the 5th anniversary of **Labyrinth**, the college-age/young adult group for LGBTQ and others at UT. She is the director of the organization which is supported by University Baptist Church (which hosted the joint event on Sunday, Aug. 26th), University Christian Church, and The Congregational Church of Austin.



8/26/18 Whit Bodman chatting with Amelia Fulbright after the Labyrinth service and lunch at UBC

Marilyn Vaché writes, "I appreciate keeping up with the Visitor. I'm excited to read about **Amy's** soon-to-be-motherhood, the revitalization of our church's participation in Austin Interfaith, the Vision Task Forces, and **Betty Bodman's** (relative) proximity to me. I will try to get together with her before long. I feel like an anthropologist, observing the differences between Austin and Southeast Connecticut. Some terms are new: 'frost heaves' for bumps in the road, 'blind drive' for hidden driveways, 'package store' for liquor store, and 'tag sale' for yard or garage sale. Bragging is common in both locales. But as one of my patients put it, 'New Englanders do have a lot to brag about.' Speaking of patients, I am closing my practice at the end of August.

I didn't find telemedicine very workable (partly my own fault in the way I set it up). I may do some brief stints (maybe California or Arizona in the winter?) as finances require. I am hoping to spend more time getting involved here. I live in the town of Salem, and the Board of Selectman (think town council) has just appointed me to the Bicentennial Planning Committee, next week I will attend an orientation to become a docent at a local art museum. There's a lot of water here, and I've enjoyed events on the shore and at the local lake (picture attached). There is no UCC church like ours, I am convinced, but I have started worshipping with a small Friends (Quaker) meeting in the New London area. It's a good antidote to the military-industrial complex that dominates the local economy and thinking. That group should lead me into some more social justice work; I haven't found a venue for that yet. Miss you all, Marilyn wanted to share the Facebook link for the Friends meeting she attends. <https://m.facebook.com/New-London-Meeting-of-the-Religious-Society-of-Friends-Quakers-357531980956774>



Summer, 2018 Marilyn Vaché and friends enjoying a summer campfire (imagine that!) by the local lake in Salem. CT.

Keith and Darcy Beresheim travelled to Michigan for **Darcy's** cousin **Stacy's** wedding outside of Lansing. During the trip, they met up with old friends outside of Ann Arbor, visited both the University of Michigan and Michigan State University's campuses, their football stadiums, and football museums. They also spent a lot of good family time with **Darcy's** extended family. (Photos continue on next page)

Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes



8/4/10 Keith and Darcy Beresheim at her cousin Stacy's wedding outside of Lansing, MI



8/9/18 Keith and Darcy Beresheim at the Michigan State football stadium in East Lansing--note the Hook'em hand signal!

Betty Bodman has arrived and is settling into her home for the year in Jersey City where she is helping her and **Whit's** daughter **Elizabeth** and son-in-law **Greg Matthews** with childcare as **Elizabeth** starts a new job teaching in the School of Social Work at Fordham University in Manhattan. Her granddaughters, **Clara**, 4, and **Elsie**, 1, and **Betty** are figuring out what their daily routine will be, but **Betty** has already figured out that her routine will include a mixture of some exhaustion mixed with a lot of hilarity. She has found an Episcopal church within walking distance which she expects to attend.

It has a lot more ritual than she likes, but the congregation's a comfortable size, the members are active in local outreach, and their fellowship feels welcoming and familiar. Whit will be holding down the fort here in Austin continuing teaching at Austin Presbyterian Seminary and working on his book and various articles. **Whit** and **Betty** hope to make a few trips forth and back between Jersey City and Austin. It is going to be an interesting year for the Bodman's!



Betty's apartment is the one just to the right of the front door with the 2 large windows



The view from Betty's apartment in Jersey City

Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

Dennis and Nodie Murphy took a weekend trip to Minnesota to visit their son **Ned** (a.k.a. **Ben**), his wife **Faye**, and grandson **James** who is almost 3. **Ned** met his parents at the airport sporting a red beard, looking like the Viking that he is. The northern family is settling into a new house while **Ned** attends school and **Faye** continues to work night shifts as an intensive care nurse. **James** put his grandparents through their paces, with “Again” being one of his favorite words! He is due for a shock when a sibling arrives in November, but life is good right now.



8/18/18 Nodie and Dennis Murphy had a great time with their 3-year-old grandson James when they visited Ned, Faye, James and assorted stuffed animals in Minnesota recently.

Julia Ross (wife of **Robin Rosson** and daughter-in-law of **Barbara Burnham** and **Chester Rosson**—and mom of 2 lively little girls) has started a new position as Program Specialist in Special Education Monitoring, Review, and Support for the Texas Education Agency. Her team is tasked with overhauling the state's special education monitoring protocol, and using this revised protocol to support districts in maintaining federal and state special education compliance. These updated monitoring protocols will focus on improving educational equity, postsecondary access, and academic achievement for students with disabilities statewide.

Don Miles had a delightful trip to far northwestern Virginia to visit his daughter, **Juliette**, and her husband, **Marlin**. His son, **Richard**, and his daughter, **Cecelia** and husband, **Fred**, joined them for a mini-reunion. The whole experience was very enjoyable in spite of bumper-removing car accident. Fortunately, Don did not even get a scratch!



8/18 Sitting next to Don is his daughter, Juliette Ritzman, granddaughter Cecelia Hubach, then her husband, Fred Hubach, Don's son Richard Miles, and opposite Don is Marlin Ritzman, Juliette's husband.

Lisa Kirch reports that she took a quick trip to Massachusetts to visit friends near Boston and to drive most of the way across Massachusetts to see "Women Artists in Paris, 1850-1900" at the Clark in Williamstown. **Lisa** notes that that is a very pretty part of the state, but it is in the middle of nowhere. While planning the trip, she asked one of her friends if they could also go to church. He grew up UCC and was involved in a failed attempt to found a UCC where **Lisa** lives in Sheffield AL, so he looked up and sent her a list from which to choose. Both of them thought that Main Street Congregational in Amesbury, MA, sounded good, so that's where they went. The building was exactly what one would expect of a New England church, but it was the people who impressed them. They were just "flat lovely" as **Lisa** says. (continued on next page)

Personals (cont)

by Pat Oakes

Lisa is sad that it won't be her new church but glad that **Rob**, her friend, has found his new church. In short: anyone who happens to be in that corner of Massachusetts on a Sunday shouldn't hesitate to visit. Anyone taking part in the UCC border mission in a couple of weeks may meet some of the Amesbury folks, so give them a warm Texas welcome.

In May, **Marilyn Gaddis**, **George Carruthers**, and the rest of the **Carruthers** Clan took a break from Baylor, work, and household chores and spent a week on Maui. They rented a house in Kaanapali, next door to Lahaina. For the young folks, it was a 15 minute walk to the beach. One day, the adults drove the famous "Road to Hana" with its 600 curves and 54 one-lane bridges. Before flying home, they drove to the summit of Halealaka and could see the smoke and steam from Kilauea on the Big Island, some 60 miles away. On June 27th, **Marilyn** celebrated her 90th birthday with a luncheon for her former Investment Club, neighbors, and women friends from Texas State days. The following Saturday night, the **Carruthers** Clan feted her at a birthday barbecue at the Senior Center in Sequin. Over 40 friends, neighbors, and family from across the US came to an "Awake Party" not a "Wake" As a surprise, **Marilyn's** sister and great-niece flew in from California! In mid-July, **Marilyn** and **George** participated in a Road Scholar Program that began in Pittsburgh and followed the Ohio River to Louisville. Before boarding the American Queen, the group spent time exploring the architectural restoration that has been and is taking place in downtown Pittsburgh. They also visited the Heinz History Museum and Fort Pitt. In Marietta, OH, they walked the Mounds Cemetery developed around the base of a prehistoric Adena burial mound, filled with Revolutionary War Officers graves. Huntington, WV, the home of Marshall University, was the site of the 1970 airplane crash that killed all the football team. Downtown, the beautiful Keith-Albee Theater, one of the best preserved "atmospheric" theaters, is being restored. In Cincinnati, the group visited the public

library to view the 1848 panorama Daguerreotype photos of the Cincinnati skyline. That afternoon, they toured the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. In Louisville, our program's study leader, a Lewis & Clark authority, led the group to the falls of the Ohio State Park Visitor's Center and to the George Rogers Clark (brother of William Clark) cabin. They left the "Queen" and spent the last night of their program at the historic Brown Hotel. Coincidentally, the L and C. lecturer's wife spent many of her summers in Wimberley with her cousins and knew all about San Marcos and Aquarena Springs.



5/18 George Carruthers and Marilyn Gaddis in Hawaii

Folks who have been with the church for a long time will remember **Herb** and **Nancy Pickett** who were very active members along with their 3 children who were with us from 1973-78. They left in 1978 to go to Pasadena, California where **Herb** worked as a senior research advisor for 30 years for NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in the field of molecular spectroscopy. **Herb** and **Nancy** retired to New Hampshire about 15 years ago. **Herb** was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 2004 and that is what took him in early August. Their 3 children are all grown up now, of course. **James** is currently starting his 3rd year as an assistant professor of history at the University of Pittsburgh. (continued on the next page)

Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

His specialty is the history of Central Asia and he has spent a lot of time learning languages and the history of those countries. He teaches Russian history as well. **Tim** and his wife **Mary** and 2 children are now living in Flagstaff, AZ. **Tim** flies for American Airlines and is in Dallas this month undergoing training for upgrading to captain. **Jennifer** and her family live in Lee, NH, about a 15 minute drive from Rollinsford, NH, where **Nancy** lives. **Jennifer** is a clinical information specialist at Wentworth Douglass Hospital in Dover, NH. **Nancy** is grateful to have her close by. She and **Herb** were very active in the the First Parish Congregational Church in Dover, so she is blessed with a wonderful support group.

Mel and **Pat Oakes**, their 3 daughters, two sons-in-law, and 3 grandchildren enjoyed a wonderful 8 day trip down memory lane as they met in the Boston area where **Pat** used to spend summers with her grandparents, a passel of cousins and lots of great-aunts and uncles. A highlight was attending church on Sunday, August 5, at the Original Congregational Church of Wrentham, Massachusetts, Established 1692, where many of **Pat's** relatives worshipped.

The **Oakes** family brought greetings from the Congregational Church of Austin and **Whit Bodman** who served as an interim pastor there a number of years ago. A number of folks in the congregation remember Whit and sent greetings back to him. After the service, a second cousin hosted a lunch for us where there was an opportunity to visit with even more cousins. One day they had intended to take a picnic to the Boston Garden and ride the swan boats—but it was 95 degrees! Instead, they went to a climbing gym where **Aunt Sarah** and **Uncle Joe** supervised (belayed) the younger set. It was a real learning experience for her and **Mel** who watched their grandchildren, including 6-year-old **Durham**, skitter up a 38 foot wall with no fear whatsoever. They visited the one room school house where **Pat's** mom went to 1st and 2nd grade in one year (now the Hanson Historical Society), went to the Breakers in Newport and had time to visit with 2 more cousins, visited several cemeteries where family members are buried—and much more. It was a great opportunity to share family stories and give their children a sense of their roots.



8/9/18 Pooped, warm Oakes family members leaving The Breakers in Newport, RI--Mardie, Beth, Eugene, Ethan, Mel, Pat, Durham, Sarah, Joe, and Emily

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

CCA at The Baseball Game



Whit Bodman organized an outing to a ball game at Dell Diamond where the Round Rock Express played the Memphis Redbirds. Keith Beresheim says the score was RR 5, Memphis 3. The game did not seem as close as the final score would indicate. A good time was had by all! Photo credit goes to René Slataper and Faye. Dierksen—Back-- Roberto Hernandez, Jonathan Geer, Tom VandeStadt, Faye front left, René Slataper, Andy Dierksen. Keith and Darcy Beresheim; front—Liz and Reuel Nash

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

Bill Beardall reminds us that on Oct 4 at 6:30 p.m., the annual Equal Justice Center Mini-Golf Fundraiser at Peter Pan Mini-Golf will take place. Come and support justice for immigrant and low-wage working families. For each of the past ten years, CCoA has collectively pooled enough contributions from members to be a Champion of Justice Sponsor for this event and these contributors will get in free. The event will feature Franklin BBQ (vegetarian options are available) and local craft beer. Come and bring your friends. Ticket prices are \$25 for Adults, \$5 for Children and \$20 for Students.



A recent golf tournament for the EJC included (back row)— Mark Kultgen, Becky Nash, Amy Harris, Reuel Nash, Joy Penticuff, Nodie Murphy, Bill Beardall, Tony Rogers, and Dennis Murphy; front, Roberto Hernandez, Jonathan Geer, and Liz Nash