

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

408 West 23rd St. Austin, Texas 78705-5214

(512) 472-2370

E-mail: [office@congregationalchurchofaustin.org](mailto:office@congregationalchurchofaustin.org)

Web site: [congregationalchurchofaustin.org](http://congregationalchurchofaustin.org)

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## **Rev. Amelia Fulbright, Transitional Pastor**

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### **Maternal Health and Reproductive Justice: Centering Voices of Black Women**

A group of us from CCA attended an Impact Texas event concerning Maternal Health and Reproductive Justice: Centering Voices of Black Women. The presentation painted the horrific state of Black Maternal Health and Reproductive Justice. The cause of the disparity is multifaceted intersecting multiple social justice issues. First, let's start at the beginning.

Maternal and Reproductive Health in the U.S. can be traced back to the "Father of Modern Gynecology", Dr. James Marion, who performed experimental procedures on enslaved black women. Dr. James Marion Sims noted in his own autobiography that his "objects" were not human and therefore did not need consent, anesthesia, dignity, or respect. Many of his "patients" died. It was the common thought of the day that black people did not feel pain. Unfortunately, that point of view still is an underlying belief in healthcare today. Black women are not listened to when it comes to their pain and other symptoms. This prevents early detection of complications. Black women are 4 times more likely than white women to die due to complications while giving birth.

If white women were experiencing the rate of maternal mortality of that of black women, then there would be protests and demonstrations. White women's mortality rate is 13 deaths per 100,000 live births, whereas, black women's mortality is 42.4 deaths per 100,000 live births. This outrageous reality is compounded by the fact that in Texas, 80% of all maternal deaths are preventable. Yes, preventable. Why does this disparity exist?

It wasn't until 1992 that white women began to be included in medical trials. Until this point, medications and treatments were based solely on how white men reacted to them. There continues to be a disparity in who is included in medical trials. Just as every other race and ethnicity, black women respond to treatments based on their DNA and other genetic make-up such as the higher rate of hypertension, pre-eclampsia, cardiac events, and diabetes.

Poverty is another factor that contributes to inaccessible healthcare and insurance. In areas of poverty, ecology can put both mother and child at risk if they lack access to clean water or are exposed to toxins. Education about reproductive rights and access to reproductive services could also help address part of the mortality rate. Around 23% of black women, especially black trans people, do not seek care due to fear of mistreatment.

In the end, it comes down to who is caring for the mother. We cannot expect only black healthcare providers to care for black mothers. White healthcare providers need to be taught about the maternal needs of black women in school and continue to hear about it throughout their practice.

Cont. on the next page

The role of our church comes down to educating ourselves, letting our elected officials know that we support change in Maternal Health and Reproductive Justice, and create space for Black Women to be heard. This month, April 11-17, 2023, is Maternal Health Week. What a perfect time to learn more about Maternal Health.

## **May Visitor Deadline April 21, 2022**

### **Church Leadership**

Trustee's Chair	Kevin Dietz
Deacon's Chair	John Goff
Outreach Coordinator	Joy Penticuff
Moderator	Liz Nash
Treasurer	Pam Tucker
Financial Secretary	Jaime Hadley
Children's Sunday School	Kay Pruett
Youth Sunday School	Open
Clerk	Reuel Nash
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Member-at-Large	Bill Beardall
Pastor	Amelia Fulbright
Dir. of Online Ministries	Britt Hicks
Director of Music	Laura Martin

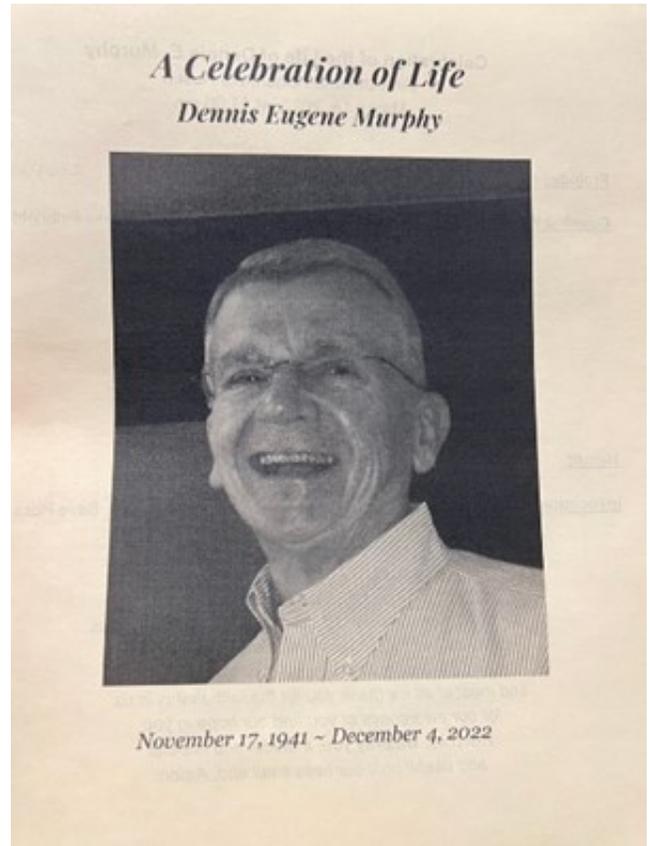
**Personals (cont)**  
**by Pat Oakes**

**A** beautiful, moving, sorrowful, uplifting celebration of life service for **Dennis Murphy** was held at the First Unitarian Church in Austin on Saturday, March 18th, at 11 a.m. followed by a lunch/reception there which allowed folks to enjoy a time of fellowship. There were about 100 family and friends in attendance (about 30 folks were on-line) and so many were friends from our church whom many of us had not seen in person since before the pandemic. Transitional pastor **Amelia Fulbright** opened the service and offered the benediction. Speakers included former pastor **Tom VandeStadt** (the eulogist who was invited by the family), prayers read by **Rambie Briggs** and **Dave Ross**, and scripture read by **Mel Oakes**. **Tom and Dennis** were great friends, and he shared many wonderful stories about **Dennis** — including his incredible kindness, his amazing array of interests, and his uncanny ability to make everyone he knew feel really special. The trio (**Amy Harris, Jonathan Geer, and Liz Lee**) played, and **Laura Martin** led the singing. Following the service, a number of family and friends spoke lovingly about how **Dennis** had affected their lives. Many thanks to **Jen Howicz, Barbara Burnham, and Jaime Hadley** who organized the lunch reception. The family were trying to decide what to have for dessert and Seth Murphy noted that his dad had always enjoyed a good cookie—so church members were invited to bring not only **Dennis's** favorites (gingersnaps and oatmeal raisin), but a wide variety of other cookies which were enjoyed by all. **Fran and Rambie Briggs, Pat and Mel Oakes, and Dave and Sara Ross** have established The **Dennis and Norma Jane Murphy** Endowed Scholarship at Huston-Tillotson University. [https://host.nxt.blackbaud.com/donor-form/?svcid=renxt&formId=cdfb045f-de8b-4d66-8e7e-626c9c640fbd&envid=p-VS7GSLjfw0CKzC3XuIK0\\_Q&zone=usa](https://host.nxt.blackbaud.com/donor-form/?svcid=renxt&formId=cdfb045f-de8b-4d66-8e7e-626c9c640fbd&envid=p-VS7GSLjfw0CKzC3XuIK0_Q&zone=usa)

Other memorial opportunities to give are the Round Rock Serving Center or Micah 6.

**Mary Sinclair** reports, "I just wanted to send my love and tell you how grateful I was to be able to watch **Dennis's** memorial yesterday. **Mel's** words were eloquent and delivered so graciously. And it was extra special to see **David, Rambie, and Cheryl** there. And of course, **Tom**. How I miss you all. I was listening from Palm Springs, where my friend, **Ruth** and I are spending our annual tennis holiday. She listened to the memorial with me and was

moved to tears at the words spoken about a truly good man, by other truly good people. She told me I was lucky to be part of our church. Don't I know it! Love to you all, **Mary**. PS. This was the first time I haven't had a birthday email from **Dennis**, and I cried all over again."



3/18/23 The program for Dennis's service

More pictures from the memorial service for Dennis can be found on pages 10 and 11."

After all of the sadness associated with **Dennis Murphy's** memorial service the day before, on Sunday, March 19, it was a joy to celebrate the baptism of **Sebastian Kai** (the name his birth mother had chosen) **Hernandez-Geer**, son of **Roberto Hernandez** and **Jonathan Geer** and baby brother of three-year-old **Xitlali**. His godparents are **Guillermo** and **Meri Hernandez**. More than 20 family members and friends in addition to the congregation's usual attendees were there to mark the special occasion, including **Edgar Cavazos** and his sister **Dayonara** whom we had not seen for a long time. **Sebastian** was a trouper and happily wore the beautiful hat which complemented his christening ensemble.

## Personals by Pat Oakes



3/19/23 The christening service for Sebastian Kai Hernandez-Geer with his godparents, Meri and Guillermo Hernandez and Jonathan and Roberto—Pastor Amelia officiating



3/19/23 Family and friends celebrating the baptism of Sebastian Kai Hernandez-Geer

**Liz Nash** shares her incredible trip to Cuba in February. "Last September, my friend, **Scott Martin** (retired minister of Faith UCC, New Braunfels), invited me to consider going to Cuba with a group of UCC ministers and members. **Scott** had connected with the group and remembered that I had once told him I wanted to go. How lucky for me! On February 9th, we flew to Miami and joined the group of 17 other people from North Carolina, Ottawa, Ontario, Massachusetts, New York, Missouri, Hawaii; Alaska, and Texas (**Scott** and I). Two of our group members had come to the U.S. from El Salvador and Columbia. The co-leaders were Rev. **Tom Warren**, pastor of Peace UCC in Greensboro, NC, and his wife, **Kim Miller**, a professional counselor in Greensboro. We also had the privilege to be led in morning Bible studies by Rev. Dr. **Clint McCann**, Evangelical Professor of Biblical Interpretation at Eden Theological

Seminary. The trip was a restart after the pandemic of the Cuba Study Seminar, a journey with a 40-year history. Over the years, the Study Seminar leaders have formed deep friendships with Rev. **Elmer Lavastida** and Rev. **Gisela Perez** in Santiago. They are a husband and wife team of Baptist pastors who, though retired from local church ministry, are still active in leadership with the Lavastida Christian Center, an ecumenical center that does technical and theological instruction with a social service mission, working on numerous projects in five of Cuba's fifteen provinces. The purpose of the trip was more "people to people" than political. The Cuban Institute for Friendship with the People (ICAP) arranged our schedule and logistics. As our wonderful guide, **Javier**, asked, were we trying to learn about their reality -- their lives, their history, their culture. I think if I just list places we went, it will give a sense of the wide spectrum of engagement of the trip. We flew into Havana, spending three days in this magnificent and historic city. Then our bus left for a one-night layover in Santa Clara and stopped the following day for a bicycle tour and lunch in Camaguey. We continued on to Santiago, a Caribbean city central to the history of the country, where we spent the next four days before flying to Miami from Holguin. In the cities we visited, we were part of presentations and discussions with our group at the ICAP Center, the National Center for Sexual Education, the Literacy Museum (documenting the literacy work in and by Cuba), the Centro Fidel Castro Ruz (documenting his life), the birthplace of Christian Cuban revolutionary **Frank País**, the Santiago (and nearby areas) religious liaison of the Cuban Communist party, doctors at a neighborhood polyclinic (medical clinic), and at a permaculture farm outside of Santiago. We heard magnificent performances given for us by the Cuban National Choir, the Orfeon Choir de Santiago, and a fabulous rumba music and dance group at a neighborhood party in Santiago. We did a walking tour of the grand and historic old city of Havana, went to the nightly cannon firing ceremony (a re-enactment of the Spanish ceremony) at the Morro Castle in Havana, visited the Che Gueverra National Monument (at his burial place) in Santa Clara, toured the Rum Museum in Santiago, stopped briefly at the school that was once the Moncada Garrison (where the first fighting on July 26, 1953, of the Cuban revolution occurred), visited the Baptist seminary and El Cobre Basilica (where the Virgin of El Cobre is, similar to the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico), visited the

## Personals by Pat Oakes

San Juan Hill monument, and spent a lovely afternoon at the stunning site of Castle Morro at the entrance to the waterway that leads from the Caribbean into Santiago. The real highlights of our trip were visiting and worshipping at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Havana and our several visits with the people of the Lavastida Center in Santiago. And we enjoyed our friendships, dancing, music, and the tremendous history there. Through all of this, our bus driver, **Francisco**, kept us safe on the road and shared time with many of us. I hope this list conveys the scope of this trip -- a "bucket list" one for me. Although I do not pretend to know (and it is hard to find unbiased information) about the truth of the political situation now in Cuba, it was very clear that the US embargo makes life very difficult every day for this resilient and proud people. They call it a blockade because our policies effectively prevent many countries from trading with them, restricting food, fuel, medicine, and other imports that can build infrastructure like higher quality internet, cell service, and roads. They are rightly proud of their educational system and medical care, although the opportunities to use that education and supply their country with medicines that must be imported await a more open door to travel and trade. I encourage all of us to advocate for that open door. Talk to me if you are interested in going on next year's trip."



Rev Elmer Lavastida and Dr. Don Beecher from our group. Don (who lives in Ottawa) and Elmer have been pen pals since they were in elementary school.



2/23 Our Cuba Study Seminar group outside the Frank País birthplace in Santiago de Cuba—Liz kneeling 2nd from the right



The Hotel Nacional -- the list of famous guests there is long, including everyone from the Mob to heads of state to movie and sports stars to authors, such as Hemingway.

**Personals**  
by Pat Oakes

Continuing the do-it-yourself tradition of the Congregational Church of Austin, **Reuel** and **Liz Nash** took care of our church sign on the corner of 23rd and San Antonio which had been scratched some time ago and then tagged more recently. When **Liz** returned from Cuba where many of her fellow travelers had gotten COVID, they stayed home on Sunday, Feb. 26th, and participated in church online. But that afternoon they went up to church and did the work. Before **Liz** left for Cuba, **Reuel** had reached out to the person who originally made the sign to find out the paint color, a standard spray paint royal blue color which he bought at Lowe's, along with the blue masking tape and a roll of masking paper. Good work, **Reuel** and **Liz**—thank you!



2/26/23 Following the "do it yourself" tradition of the church—Liz and Reuel hard at work #3



2/26/23 Following the "do it yourself" tradition of the church, Reuel and Liz Nash fixed the sign at the corner of San Antonio and 23rd



2/26/23 Looking much better thanks to Liz and Reuel! #4



2/26/23 Following the "do it yourself" tradition of the church #2

**John Goff** and **Gail Christeson** have entered into what they are calling "The Season of **Cameron**." **Cameron** is in his fourth year of medical school at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. March 17th (Happy St. Patrick's Day!) was Residency Match Day where students find out where they will be spending their next three years. It was an exciting event where students opened envelopes across the country at noon eastern time to learn their match. **Cameron** was overjoyed to match to his top choice which was to remain at Baylor for Internal Medicine! He will start in June. Next up, on April 2nd, **Cameron** and his fiancée **Amber** will have a wedding in the hill country with family coming in from all over the country and even from Europe (Cameron's uncle and Gail's brother Eric and his wife Dorothea). The "season" concludes with **Cameron's** med school graduation in May.

## Personals by Pat Oakes



3/17/23 Gail Christeson and John Goff with their son Cameron who matched with his first choice for his upcoming residency

Over two Sundays in late February and early March, a number of folks from our church walked over to University Presbyterian Church after services to look at the neighborhood model created by UT architecture students. Be sure and zoom in on the model itself, see if you can see where our church is, and what changes are coming.



3/5/23 UT architecture students created and displayed this neighborhood model of some of the changes going on in our church neighborhood from Nueces to San Antonio to Guadalupe and the west boundary of the UT campus. Our church is on the left--middle at 23rd and San Antonio



3/5/23 UT architecture students created and displayed this neighborhood model of some of the changes going on in our church neighborhood from Nueces to San Antonio to Guadalupe and the west boundary of the UT campus—Be sure and scroll in.



3/19/23 Huge changes are already visible at the corner of 23rd and San Antonio St.—looking toward 24th St.

**Whit Bodman** was working on their moving process to New Jersey in late February when he noticed an odd spot on his cheek which looked infected. He decided to have it looked at a nearby emergency center. In the meantime, wife **Betty** (a former nurse) in Austin reminded him that he had had a really bad infection some years ago and that perhaps he should mention that to the doctor on site. As soon as he mentioned the term necrotizing fasciitis, the doctor told Whit that he was going to go straight to Jersey City Medical Center where he spent three days receiving antibiotics via an infusion which he did. Fortunately, he never felt bad, and he definitely benefitted from the saying "better safe than sorry."

**Personals (cont)**  
by Pat Oakes

**Debby Fisher Kohrt** with daughter **Kristen** and son-in-law **Jason Parkhill** and grandchildren **Caleb** and **Zooey** and daughter-in-law **Laurel Kohrt** (widow of **Debby's** son **Jarod**) and grandchildren **Wesley** and **Brynn** had a marvelous week at Disney World in Orlando over spring break. It was a bitter-sweet vacation for the whole family—the last time they were together was in 2018 when **Jarod** was still with them (d. Aug. 2022).



3/13/23 Debby Fisher Kohrt with her family at Disney World in Orlando--Debby, Caleb, 15, Jason, Zooey, 11, and Kristen Parkhill with Laurel Kohrt and her 2 little ones--Wesley, 5, and Brynn, 3



3/15/23 Cousin love fest with Wesley Kohrt, Caleb Parkhill, Brynn Kohrt, and Zooey Parkhill at Disney World



3/15/23 Debby Kohrt with her grandchildren Brynn and Wesley Kohrt at Disney World



3/16/23 Brynn and Wesley Kohrt with their mom Laurel Kohrt at Disney World

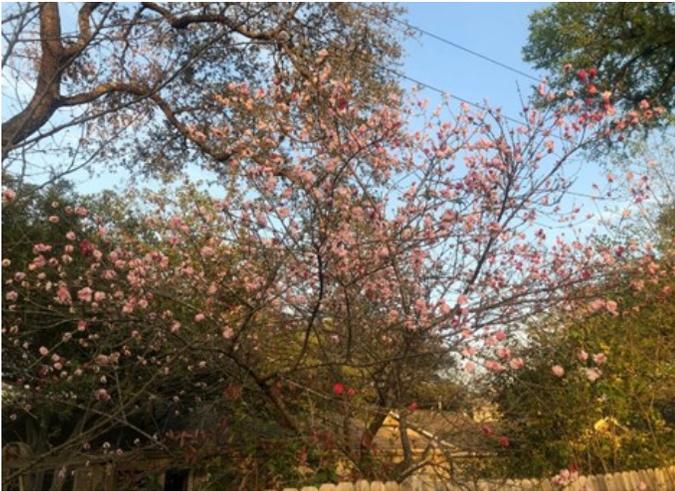
Sisters **Cheryl Appel** and **Debbie Appel Knowlton** were in town for almost a week in March—making a special trip to Austin (from Madison, Wisconsin, and N. Salem, New York) to be able to attend **Dennis Murphy's** celebration of life and to visit with family and friends. **Cheryl** came down with Covid on Monday, the 20th, which meant they had to rely on Zoom for most of their visits. They did make a special trip back to the church on the 22nd to have their picture taken next to the last remaining ornamental peach tree that their dad **Vic Appel**, had planted on San Antonio and 23rd St. by the church about 20 years ago.

## Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes



2/23/23 Debbie and Cheryl Appel at San Antonio and 23rd streets by the last remaining ornamental peach tree at the church planted by their dad Vic Appel nearly 20 years ago

such a relief to both of them that they have churches to serve that allow them to be together every night—a rarity in their over 20 years of marriage. **Kristin** is the Senior Pastor at First Christian Church of Denton, Texas. **Brent** is the Interim Pastor at Casa View Christian Church, in Dallas, Texas. On the evening of January 31<sup>st</sup>, it was very cold and icy in the Denton, Texas, area. **Brent** was at home, thought of something he needed in his car, and went out to get it, -- but he slipped on the ice and fell flat on his back, breaking a vertebrae in his neck. **Kristin** was there, called 911, and he was transported to the hospital. The swelling around the fracture was causing paralysis from the neck down. He had surgery on February 1<sup>st</sup>, and then transferred to rehabilitation. He was released from rehab and went home on February 28. He has really worked hard on his exercises and can now walk a distance with a walker, his left arm and hand work a bit better than his right hand now, but the expectation is that he will reach close to a complete recovery by the end of a year of continued rehab. Their three daughters took turns traveling to Denton to help out through this trauma and the outlook looks good. We are amazed and grateful for the progress of his recovery.” **Kristin** and **Brent** and family, you are all in our prayers.



3/11/23 Vic Appel's transplanted peach tree (in 2009) from near the church now in Mel and Pat Oakes' back yard and thriving!

Old-timers from the church will remember **Omer** and **Zona Galle** who were members of the church for many years and who now live in North Newton, Kansas. Their daughter **Kristin Galle** and her husband **Brent Hampton** are both ordained ministers. **Omer** writes, “**Kristin** and **Brent** have been living together in the same house in Denton for more than a year now and enjoy that greatly. It has been

**Personals (cont)**  
**by Pat Oakes**



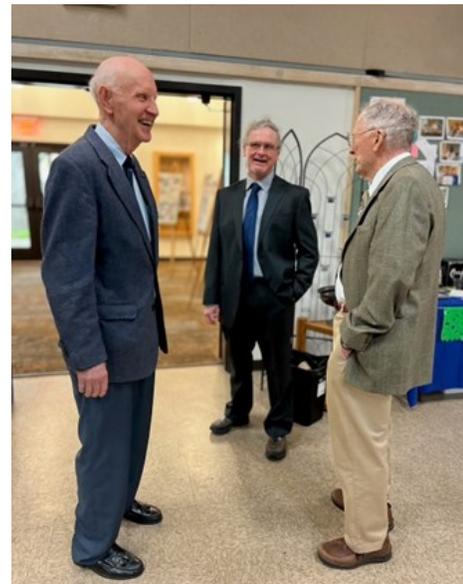
3/18/23 Seth Murphy reading his eulogy for his father Dennis



3/18/23 Tony Rogers, former cellist at the church, our trio--Amy Harris, Jonathan Geer, Liz Lee, and song leader Laura Martin. The trio's music was wonderful.



3/18/23 Pastor Amelia giving the benediction at Dennis's celebration of life service



3/18/23 Mel Oakes, Tom VandeStadt and Dave Ross all spoke at the service.



3/18/23 Sarah Murphy Sennour with long-time friend Fran Briggs at her dad's memorial service



3/18/23 Former church cellist Marilyn Harris and Mardie Oakes at Dennis Murphy's memorial service

**Personals (cont)  
by Pat Oakes**



3/18/23 Sarah Darter, Nodie Murphy, Lynn Chavarria, Joy Penticuff, Cheryl Appel--at Dennis Murphy's celebration of life service



Steve Domingue and Norma Hawes after Dennis's memorial service



3/18/23 Warinda Harris and Tom VandeStadt after Dennis Murphy's memorial service



3/18/23 George Hetrick, Pat Oakes, and Bill Campbell after Dennis Murphy's memorial service



3/18/23 Lunch with friends after Dennis Murphy's memorial service--Rambie Briggs, Carolyn Thompson, Cheryl Appel, Pat Oakes, and Debbie Appel Knowlton. Debbie and Rambie spoke at the service.



3/18/23 John Moore, Pam Tucker, Jaime Hadley, and Mel Oakes visiting after Dennis's memorial service

## History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes



**Hildegard Kuehne Everett**, a dear friend, and a life-long member of the church (her parents were very early members of the church) taught me how to make these Easter eggs more than 50 years ago, just as the old German settlers did in Fredericksburg--using bluebonnets and the papery part of onion skins. **Hildegard's** mother and father (b. 1872—a very early member of the UT physics department) were the children of German immigrants. She learned from friends and family how to make these beautiful eggs. The bluebonnets are already starting to bloom this year and may be gone before Easter, so making them may not be possible--but one can always dye the onion skin eggs. You could even make the bluebonnet eggs a week or so in advance.

Children might also enjoy the process—with parental supervision, of course. Some of you may have bluebonnets nearby which you can pick. If you can get bluebonnets, you will need 4-5 per egg. Start right now saving onion skins—here's hoping that stores have onions in supply (the yellow ones work best—purple will also work). You will need white unboiled eggs, strips of cloth about 2 inches wide and 8-10 inches long, straight pins, a pot and lid for each group of eggs, and water. You use the same technique with each type of coloring agent. Take the uncooked egg in your hands and place the flowers or onion skins as close together as you can manage around the egg. Then take the cloth strips and carefully wrap the egg as closely/tightly as you can—don't break the egg— until you have wrapped the whole egg. Carefully take a straight pin and secure the strip so that it will stay wound around the egg. Continue with the rest of the eggs. Place them in the pan, cover with water and a lid, bring to a boil, let boil for one minute, and then let sit off the heat for 30 minutes or so—more won't hurt. Gently drain the eggs, cover with cold water (maybe put in some ice cubes) and let them sit until cool. Drain and remove the pins, strips, and the skins/flowers. Store in the refrigerator until ready to delight you family/friends with your Easter creations. Enjoy! Happy Easter!!