

# THE VISITOR

April 2024

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

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**Rev. Ginny Brown Daniel, Interim Pastor**

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On days when I work from home in Spring, I have an officemate, who offers support, a listening ear, and a firm reminder to get up and move around. That's **Sissy**, one of my two dogs (the other dog, Titan, goes to work with my husband).



Sissy is a mix, who must have been abused as a puppy because she came to us skiddish. She would flinch when we first tried to pet her until she warmed up to you to know you were safe. Her name was supposed to be a derogatory description of her more introverted nature. But immediately, I called her – *Sissy with the Go-Go Girl Power!*

As an adult, I have never been a dog person. Cats were more my speed. But now, as I have 2 dogs and 2 cats, I am amazed how pets break us open to the love we have for others and ourselves. Perhaps that's why the death of a pet is so painful. We give them access to our most intimate moments in life, and they love us when we don't feel loved by others or ourselves.

I find it wonderful that the grassy area of the church yard often has students bringing their dogs to play for a little bit of "green space." What a gift of joy for the pets and their companions during their day.

Saint **Francis** of Assisi loved animals and felt an intimate connection with birds, worms, and even wolves. He once said, "*If you have people, who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have people, who will deal likewise with their fellow person.*" Brother **Francis** was known for blessing animals all around him as good and loved by God.

For all of these reasons and more, we will have a **Blessing of the Animals service in the grassy courtyard area on Saturday, April 27 at 3 pm.** Please bring your pets, and I will bless all of your furry family

Cont. on the next page

members as well as our West Campus neighbors. We are having this service a few days after Earth Day and hope to offer this gift for our student neighbors before they leave for the summer. I look forward to meeting your furry family! Blessings, Ginny



## May's Visitor Deadline April 26, 2024

### Church Leadership

Trustee's Chair	John Goff
Deacon's Chair	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
Newsletter Personals Editor	Pat Oakes
Member-at-Large	Bill Beardall
Pastor	Ginny Brown Daniel
Dir. of Online Ministries	Open
Director of Music	Laura Martin

## Personals by Pat Oakes

**B**ill Campbell reports, " In late February and early March **Victoria** and I took a trip to Asia. The trip involved spending several days in Taiwan (mostly Taipei), where **Victoria** grew up, and then a cruise from **Taipei** to Okinawa and Japan. It was a very good trip beginning with seeing key places from **Victoria's** childhood. **Victoria** had not been back to Taiwan in 25 years and was proud to see Taiwan's continued development as a prosperous democracy. In Taiwan we had the benefit of being hosted by **Victoria's** cousin **Lin** who took us to many places including Taiwan's beautiful Sun Moon Lake. Our cruise stop in Okinawa was very interesting as we toured sites commemorating the World War II battle in Okinawa. Okinawa was the site of virtually all the ground fighting that took place on Japanese soil in WWII. I was quite surprised to learn that the Allied assault on Okinawa involved more ships and personnel than the D Day invasion of France. The death toll of the fighting in the spring of 1945 of about 250,000 killed was horrendous for the civilian population as well as the soldiers of all sides. The Peace Memorial we toured had engraved stones with the names of those killed, including the military personnel of all countries involved and of the civilians killed. Equally moving was our visit to Hiroshima and its Peace Memorial, located at ground zero. Hiroshima today is a very nice and modern city of more than 1,000,000 population. An interesting thing our guide pointed out was that virtually every major city in Japan (other than Kyoto) had been firebombed before Hiroshima was bombed and looked much like Hiroshima looked after the bomb was dropped. Japan's heavy reliance on wood construction before the war made its cities extremely vulnerable to fire-bombing. We learned that the Allies decided to spare Kyoto, Japan's cultural and spiritual center, because it was felt that bombing Kyoto would make it harder to gain Japan's surrender and its cooperation in the war's aftermath. After Hiroshima we visited several other cities including Kyoto, Nara, Osaka and, very briefly, Tokyo. Kyoto was uniquely beautiful with its older architecture and many shrines and temples. Kyoto was also packed with tourists, and it was not even prime tourist season. The other cities were all bustling modern cities and very nice places to visit. I think every city has a prominent castle. All in all, Japan was a wonderful country to visit. For **Victoria** the trip also had the benefit of substantially softening some ill feelings that were a legacy of the cruel treatment of the Chinese people, including **Victoria's** mother and her family, under Japanese occupation.



2/24 Bill and Victoria at the palace of the Emperor of Japan



2/24 The Hiroshima Peace Memorial—the domed building in the background, known as the A Bomb Dome, is a badly damaged building that largely survived the bomb because it is built from stone.



2/24 The Okinawa Peace Memorial where the names of all who died in the battle in 1945 are inscribed on memorial stones much like the Vietnam War memorial in Washington.

## Personals (cont.) by Pat Oakes

**Kevin Dietz** shares a short excerpt from the March 18, 2024, issue of the Austin American-Statesman, "McCallum sweeps Crockett: **John Dietz** fanned 14 in a three-hit shutout and **Nico Sanchez** went 3 for 4 during an 8-0 win, while **Nathan Nagy** had four RBI and **Sanchez, Charlie Cox** and **CJ Willie** all had two hits in a 13-3 victory." That was local news, however. Trans-Atlantic news included a report on eldest daughter **Isabella**, currently a junior at Trinity University, who spending the spring semester studying abroad at Syracuse University in Florence, Italy. **Rachel** and **Francesca** spent their spring break week visiting **Isabella** and revisiting the city **Rachel** fell in love with when she was a student studying abroad. It was great to see not only **Kevin** at church on Easter Sunday, but also **Rachel, John, and Francesca**.



3/24 Isabella Dietz with her mom Rachel in Florence



3/24 Isabella taking a selfie of herself and Francesca and her mom Rachel from the Ponte Vecchio at the Arno River in Florence

**Kay Pruett** has made several trips so far this year. In January, she visited Seattle and with her sister, **Charlene Sutton**, celebrated her mother, **Wynona Morrison's**, 90th birthday. **Wynona** was honored for her life and 79 years of church membership at Northminster Presbyterian Church, where **Kay** was baptized, confirmed, and married. **Wynona** was specifically recognized for her leadership and work on social justice issues including taking a strong stand against it when the church was considering endorsing an anti LGBTQ city ordinance. Early in February **Kay** took a two-day camping trip to Palmetto State Park, which she had wanted to visit for some time. She loved hiking among the unfamiliar and beautiful vegetation that grows in that swampy area, so much that she returned the next weekend with friends for a day hike. Ending out the month, **Kay** joined friends on a week-long cruise to Roatan, Costa Maya, and Cozumel. The highlights were the beautiful views, visiting an aviary in Costa Maya, snorkeling among schools of colorful fish in Cozumel, and the specially prepared meals and desserts she was accommodated with.



2/24 Kay really enjoyed the beautiful desserts she was served on the cruise



2/24 Mahogany Bay, Roatan, Honduras where Kay took a chair lift to the beach

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

gest adventure was renting a car and learning how to drive on the left side of the road!



2/24 Kay Pruett with a tropical hibiscus



2/24 Beautiful birds in an aviary in Costa Maya



3/24 Kalli inside the Trinity University Library in Dublin



3/24 Becky nearly getting blown away at the Cliffs of Moher

**Nodie Murphy** (who now lives in San Antonio with her daughter **Sarah** and son-in-law **Larbi**) had a great visit from her sister **Missy** (aka **Mary Ellen**) who lives near Denver from February 27<sup>th</sup> - March 4<sup>th</sup>. They had a wonderful time catching up and reminiscing .

**Becky Nash** and her boss/good friend **Kalli** had a terrific trip to Ireland and saw a great deal in a short period of time—visiting Dublin and Galway and places in between. They saw the Book of Kells, Trinity Library, the **Jeanie Johnston** famine ship museum, and the Emigration Museum in Dublin, the Cliffs of Moher, and the beautiful Irish countryside. They also really enjoyed the food. Both **Kalli** and **Becky** had been looking for an interesting place to visit and when they found the castle on Airbnb, they decided they absolutely had to go there. For **Becky**, her big-

Photos cont. on next page

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



3/24 Craughwell Castle where Becky and Kalli stayed—complete with arrow slits!



2/24 Andrea with Rudolfo Tamayo, a retired lawyer in Santiago, who is originally from Holguin, Cuba

Cuba, Part two **Andrea Haksoon Low** continues with more info about the trip she and **Betty Bodman** made to Cuba as part of the annual UCC Cuba study seminar (**Liz Nash** attended in 2023). They left home 2/8/24, spent the night at the Miami International Airport Holiday Inn, then flew to Havana very early the next morning. They spent three nights in Havana, 1 night in Santa Clara, and 5 nights in Santiago de Cuba. They flew back to Miami from Santiago on 2/18/24, but due to thunderstorms, **Andrea** couldn't get back to Austin, so she spent an extra night at the Miami Airport Hotel and returned home on 2/19/24.



2/24 Children at the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution neighborhood party in Santiago, Cuba



2/24 Keyanta from Atlanta, GA, a student at the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM)



2/24 Elmer Lavastida of the Lavastida Christian Center explaining the life of Frank Pais, (b. 1934; d. (assassinated) 30 July 1957), Cuban revolutionary leader during the Batista dictatorship.

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

When you read the History Corner you will see why **David Bartholomew** wrote back such a long response. **David** was Pastor **John Towery's** intern for a year (June 1986-July 1987) and he and his wife and 2 daughters came back to Austin for our 100th anniversary celebration in 2001. **David** writes from their home in Providence, RI, " This past year has been one of change for us. Our youngest daughter, **Lydia**, got married in Nov. to a person she'd been dating since her 3rd year in college. He's Muslim so they had the first part of their Muslim wedding, the legal part, in November in Atlanta where his parents live, and we'll have the Christian part this October. Then there will be the final part of the Muslim wedding back in Atlanta in November of this year. They both live and work in the Boston area, which is where our oldest daughter, **Audrey**, and her husband also live. So, we're all within an hour of one another, which is nice. **Audrey** continues to work as a lawyer for a company, so she's in corporate law, and doing well. She and her husband, **Matt**, work for the same company. They both get to work from home most of the time, and when they do have to go into the office, they go together because they work in the same office building. **Audrey** and **Matt** recently adopted a second cat. They are all (**Audrey**, **Matt**, Moochie, and Dumpling) doing well in their small condo in Boston. As for me, I left my job with the Southern New England Conference, UCC, in December and in January I began working full time preparing taxes for people, with a specialization on clergy taxes. It's an area with lots of unique tax laws and most CPAs don't know how to prepare clergy taxes accurately. I've been doing this for many years as a side job but decided to do it full time this year. Right now, I'm swamped, so life is crazy, but good crazy. **Dena** continues in her role as the Bishop's Chief of Staff, COO of the Episcopal Diocese. She's very busy dealing with all things related to the local church and clergy. I'm attaching three photos from Lydia and Ahmed's Nikah. That's the name of the Muslim legal ceremony they had last November. A fun and surprising fact is that the Muslim religious leader who officiated was born and raised in Austin! I laughed when he told me, and we had a good time reminiscing about Austin. He, too, has been gone for a number of years. Anyway, one photo shows **Lydia** and **Ahmed** during the early part of the service when Lydia was still wearing a veil over her face, then later in the second photo she was able to go without it as you can see. The third photo is one of our family with

**Ahmed's** family, my new in-laws. Our family is on the left side, and moving from the farthest left toward the middle is: **Matt** (**Audrey's** husband), **Audrey**, me, **Dena**, **Lydia** and **Ahmed** in the center, then **Ahmed's** younger sister (**Deesha**), his mom and dad, his sister-in-law, and his older brother (**Mohammed**).



11/23 Lydia and Ahmed during the early part of the Muslim service when Lydia was still wearing a veil over her face



11/23 Lydia and Ahmed later in their marriage service

Photos cont. on the next page

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



11/23 Matt (Audrey's husband), Audrey, David Cleaver-Bartholomew, Dena Cleaver-Bartholomew, Lydia and Ahmed in the center, then Ahmed's younger sister (Deesha), his mom and dad, his sister-in-law, and his older brother (Mohammed).

**Fran and Rambie Briggs** enjoyed a bumper crop of bluebonnets this spring, lack of rain notwithstanding. Enjoy!



3/24 Beautiful bluebonnets at Fran and Rambie's



3/24 A bumper crop of beautiful bluebonnets at Fran and Rambie's Lake Travis home—note their dock at the back of the photo

We missed **Victoria Li** at church on Easter Sunday, but she had a marvelous reason for not being there. Her daughter **Jocelyn** received an invitation to the White House's 2024 Egg Roll! **Victoria** says, "I am in DC right now and have had a grand time with **Jocelyn** and my two grand kids **Lucas** and **Evie**."



4/1/24 Victoria Li with her daughter Jocelyn Tau and grandchildren Lucas and Evie at the White House for the annual Easter egg roll

**Mel and Pat Oakes** enjoyed a spring outing to Pease Park on the 26th of March—a beautiful, cool, and sunny day. **Pat** had read in the Sunday paper that week about a public art project, an 18-foot-

## Personals (cont.) by Pat Oakes

tall troll named Malin created by a Denmark-based artist named **Thomas Dambo**. Intrigued (and after calling the Pease Park Conservancy to find out about possible handicapped parking), she and **Mel** found a parking place at the south end of the park—close to Lamar Blvd. and 12th St.—and walked about 1/2 mile into the park and found the troll which was created almost totally out of recycled wood—including tree roots for the hair. It is well worth a visit! They also enjoyed an Easter weekend visit from **Pat's** great-nephew **Scott Blatnik** (who hails from the Cleveland, Ohio, area and is in college at the University of Cincinnati) who came up from Corpus Christi where he is doing an internship in chemical engineering. Not only did **Scott** do an amazing job helping **Mel** with issues in our attic due to a recent serious plumbing issue, but he sang with the choir on Easter morning.



3/26/24 Pat and Mel visiting magnificent Malin,  
the new troll in Pease Park



3/31/24 Easter with Mel, Pat and Scott

**Roberto Hernandez** reports, "This trip was supposed to happen last year when my uncle, **Rodolfo Ramirez Hernandez**, was in the hospital very ill for around a week, so, my mama wanted to see him before it was too late, but then, my dad got very ill, too, about the same time, so we cancelled the trip hoping to see my uncle soon and also to see my dad recovered. Thanks to God, my uncle made it as well as my dad. My brother and his family (**Guillermo Hernandez Ramirez**, my niece and nephew, **Abril** and **Memito III** and my sister-in-law **Ery Garcia**) drove from Monterrey, Mexico, to Bastrop, so we could all depart together for San Diego from the Austin airport. Remember, my parents had been in the USA for 3 weeks already, spending quality time with me, the kiddos and **Jonny** (aka **Jonathan**). After 3 weeks we all were ready to get out of town for a few days. We arrived at San Diego Airport on Sunday morning, very excited to see my uncle and his family. We rented a van to drive to Oceanside, California, and we arrived at my uncle's house with a welcome party. My uncle, my aunt, my cousins, and some other relatives of my mama's extended family that we had not seen for decades were there to welcome us. There was a lot of food, a regional band (live music) and beer, everything to welcome us. We all had a wonderful time, but no one enjoyed it more than my mom. We stayed in an Airbnb by the beach (a beautiful place), close to my uncle's

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

house. We visited the San Diego Zoo, Legoland California, and the La Jolla area by the beach in San Diego, while we were there. We LOVED the city, the weather and the vibe of the town.”



3/24 The whole family together--Tio Rudy Ramirez, Memo III, Abril Hernandez Garcia, Tia Maria Ramirez, Jasse Ramirez, Evangelina Ramirez, Guillermo Hernandez I, Ery Garcia, Guillermo II and Jonathan, Sebastian, Roberto, and Xitlali



3/24 Jonathan swinging by the sea with Sebastian and Xitlali

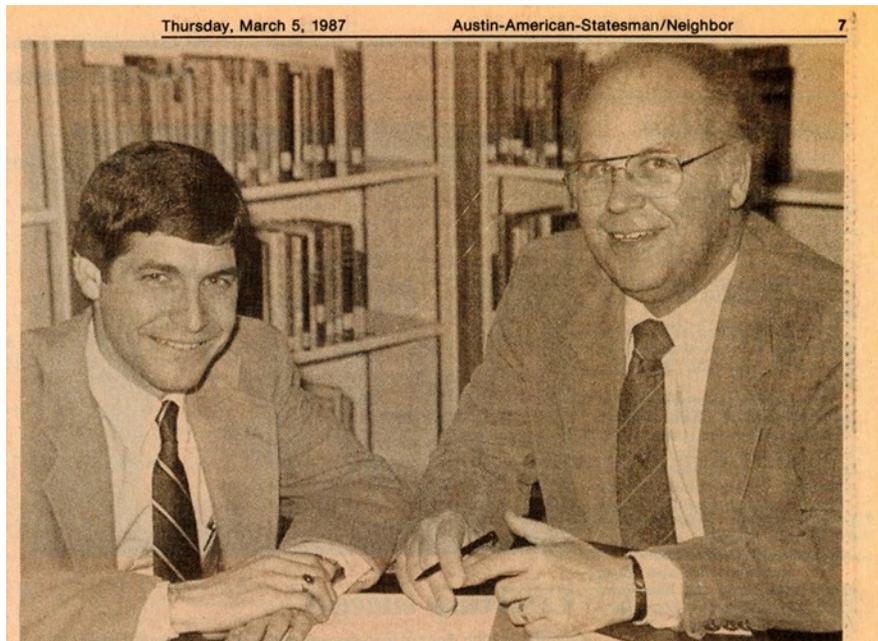


3/24 The whole family enjoyed Legoland--center --Sebastian, Roberto, Jonathan, and Xitlali

Many thanks to the many folks (this is not a complete list) who contributed to the delicious Easter brunch after the service on Easter Sunday. Deacon **Joy Penticuff** did an excellent job of recruiting folks and getting everything set up. There was quite a crowd at the service, and everyone enjoyed the delicious goodies and visiting with all of the folks. **Lynne Lemley** brought her famous berries and cream to go with scones brought by **Sara Ross**, **Liz Nash** brought savory bread rolls, **Carolyn Thompson** and **Pat Oakes** brought deviled eggs (bringing back fond memories of **Ruth Koenig** who always brought them for festive occasions) and **Carolyn** also brought red peppers and zucchini, **Scott Blatnik** brought his family’s traditional bunny breads, **Joy** brought fruit punch, chocolate candies and flowers and decorations for the table. Thanks to the folks who helped with the cleanup. **Roberto Hernandez** brought Easter eggs for the Easter egg hunt with plenty of extras to hand out to adults—featuring **Xitlali** and **Sebastian**. Thanks also to the augmented choir who sang beautifully during the service. It was really wonderful to have **Barbara Burnham** back in the choir after struggling for several weeks with asthma.

## History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

This is a convoluted way to tell you how this clipping surfaced in our house last week. **Mel and Pat Oakes** have had a serious plumbing issue (a leak in the foundation) which involved piping their hot water through their attic. In order to make it easier for the plumbers and to speed the process along, a massive cleanup of the attic ensued (they have been in their home since 1967). **Mel** found the clipping of **David Bartholomew** in one of the boxes and both **Pat** and **Mel** thought that the discussion in the article was still true all these many years later. As we ponder the types of programs our new church facility could/should provide/host, faith development of young adults is still an important component.



Thursday, March 5, 1987

Austin-American-Statesman/Neighbor

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Staff photo by Jose Novoa

David Bartholomew, left, the United Church of Christ representative to the Austin Faith Education Council, and Dr. L. Wayne Bryan, of the United Campus Ministry of Austin, helped organize a conference on faith development for adults throughout the day Saturday.

# Developing faith is focus of conference for adults

By Jose Novoa  
American-Statesman Staff

The Austin Faith Education Council, a newly formed interdenominational association of religious educators, is sponsoring a conference on faith development for adults.

The conference will be Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Austin Marriott-Capitol, and will feature presentations by James Fowler, professor of theology and human development at Emory University, Ga., and Leroy Thomas Howe, professor of theology and pastoral care at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University.

Conference participants will also benefit from workshops led by local teachers, counselors and clergy with experience in the field of adult faith development.

The cost of the conference, which includes lunch, will be \$35 today and Friday, and \$40 at the

door.

To register call 263-5803 or 452-8894.

The conference is the first event sponsored by the Austin Faith Education Council, said David Bartholomew, the United Church of Christ representative on the council.

The council includes eight Protestant denominations and the Catholic Church, he said.

Bartholomew said the council formed in June to facilitate communication between people in local churches involved in faith development.

Participation in the council will allow religious educators in Austin to pool their resources and draw on the strengths of other adult education programs, Bartholomew said.

"It broadens the pool of knowledge, and gives us access to that pool," he said.

The council also functions as a support group, Bartholomew said.

"It gets pretty lonely out there sometimes. Having someone with whom we can talk and share our concerns and frustrations can be very helpful," he said.

Most churches have strong youth education programs but do not do as much as they should to help adults, Bartholomew said.

"Questions of meaning, with a capital 'M,' are questions everyone will inevitably ask in their life: Why do I exist, what is my purpose in life? Human beings need a sense of meaning in their lives in order to flower," he said.

The most effective way to address those concerns is to create an environment in which those questions can be asked through the use of study groups and social events, Bartholomew said.

"Faith is not something that is ever finished, but is an ongoing process," he said. "It needs continual attention."