

THE VISITOR

December 2022

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Amelia Fulbright, Transitional Pastor



Dear Members & Friends,

I find myself writing this to you in the middle of the night, here in the middle of a week when our congregation is processing the loss of our dear friend, [Dennis Murphy](#). I imagine that some of you are restless, too. We already have lost several pillars of the church this year, and Dennis's death is acutely painful in that it was so unexpected. As I have spoken with some of you in your grief, I am struck by how dearly beloved Dennis was and is, both by friends his age and by younger members who experienced him as a mentor, advocate, and encourager. Dennis gave freely of himself to so many people in so many ways.

This fresh grief is the latest reminder that we are in an odd and disorienting place as a congregation. In this liminal space, the former things are passing away, while the new is still too far out on the horizon to see with full clarity. Yet, as we quite literally bury those who have died, we also notice signs of life and resurrection—new members, new visitors, and new staff, to name a few.

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The saints we have lost this year were forward thinkers. They had hopes and dreams for the future of CCA, even though they knew they wouldn't be around to see them come to fruition. This Sunday we will vote on a resolution to forego the option of renovating our current buildings and to instead pursue other options for redevelopment. As many of you know, Dennis worked closely with Tom VandeStadt and Beardall develop a vision for what might be possible on the corner of 23rd and San Antonio. As difficult as it will be to let go of our current sanctuary space, Dennis knew that letting go and moving forward would be the pathway toward renewal and sustainability. We will honor his legacy and the legacy of so many other saints gone before by continuing to invest in our church and its future—to let go so we can live.

A smaller congregation can sometimes feel like a family, with all the beauty, intimacy, and reliability that entails (plus some of the dysfunction, too). Within the family we all have different roles to fulfill, and when a family member dies or someone new joins the family (through birth, marriage, adoption, or friendship), roles must be renegotiated. The same is true for churches: As some of our elders pass on and new members and visitors come into our fellowship, we will need to experiment with new roles, configurations, and relational ties. This can take time and multiple iterations before we settle into ways of being church that work for us all...and it is a lot of change to navigate!

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In this liminal space, it might be tempting to withdraw and hold back from investing in our life together. *I want to invite you to lean in instead.* Now more than ever, it is the strength of our connections that will sustain us. If you notice someone new that you haven't met before, make a point of introducing yourself and beginning a relationship. If you notice that you haven't seen someone at church in a while, make a point of reaching out to them to see how things are going. If you know that someone is sick or struggling in any way, make a point of reaching out to check on them.

Each week we need people to make coffee and greet visitors, read scriptures and light candles, play with our children and notice the lonely. We also need members to serve on our Boards and committees. If you are nominated, I hope you will prayerfully consider serving, not out of guilt or obligation, but because you are invested in the future. We each have something to offer and a role to play.

And speaking of signs of life, did you know that on any given Sunday, when you add up the number of on-site worshippers + all those who view the service or sermon on YouTube, our attendance is as much or more than prior to the pandemic? Even on a lower attendance Sunday, we generally have at least 20-25 people at church plus 40-50 views on YouTube, for an approximate total of 60-70 people engaging in one way or another. On a higher attendance Sunday, we will have a total of 80-90 people engaging, either onsite or online. Over the past year, we've had 5 or 6 Sundays where our totals have been over 100, even as high as 130 or 140. Part of the shifting paradigm for measuring a congregation's vitality is assessing overall impact, not just counting the number of people in the pews.

As we grow and change together, there will be times when the pain of loss is seemingly unbearable, there will be times of contagious excitement about new possibilities, and there will be many mundane moments in between. The goal is to keep moving forward—grieving when necessary, feeling joy when it flows, and trusting that God is with us all along the way. All along the way.

With love,

Pastor Amelia

January Visitor Deadline December 26, 2022

Church Leadership

Trustee's Chair	Kevin Dietz
Deacon's Chair	Jen Howicz
Outreach Coordinator	Whit Bodman
Moderator	Joy Penticuff
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
by Pat Oakes

Bill Beardall reports that the October 25 Equal Justice Center fundraiser at Peter Pan Mini-Golf was a great success, both as a fund-raiser and as a friend-raiser. The event raised over \$28,000 to support EJC's legal aid for immigrant and low-wage working people. Individual CCA members combined their multiple contributions to make CCA one of the event's top two event sponsors with aggregate contributions of more than \$4,200.00 The success of the event this year was especially welcome, after two years in which it had to be cancelled due to the pandemic but resuming an otherwise annual tradition begun in 2010. Throughout those years, the CCA has proven to be among the EJC's most faithful supporters and has earned a reputation as one of the top golfing teams on the mini-golf course. EJC is immensely grateful for both CCA's support and CCA's mini-golf prowess.



10/25/22 Jaime Hadley getting a big hug from Beth Gleason in town from Maine for the Equal Justice Center Peter Pan Golf Tournament



10/25/22 Gail Christeson and John Goff, Whit Bodman, and Reuel Nash enjoying Franklin barbecue and vegetarian paella at the Equal Justice Center Peter Pan Golf Tournament



10/25/22 The Zercher/Fulbright family at the Equal Justice Center golf tournament at Peter Pan Golf--Jonathan, George, Pastor Amelia, and Vivienne standing with Peter Pan



10/25/22 Paul Toyozaki and Andrea Low at the Equal Justice Center Peter Pan Golf Tournament

Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes



10/25/22 Beth Gleason, Jaime Hadley, Reuel and Liz Nash, and Mike Conwell—Pillars of Justice!



10/25/22 A pirate, Pat Oakes, and Bill Beardall at the Equal Justice Center Peter Pan Golf Tournament

It was a joy to welcome new members on Sunday, November 6. **Anya Toskey** is a master's student studying clinical social work at UT. She has a background working with kids and adolescents in therapeutic and educational settings, including at a residential treatment center, in high school student support services, and at a learning center. As a CWEC scholar, she plans to work within the child welfare system upon graduating next May. She and her dog Maya have called Austin home for five years and love exploring here, though they step out every so often to visit family around Texas and her fiancé **Kevin** in Mexico. She was lucky enough to grow up

with the First Congregational Church of Houston as her previous "home church" and feels grateful to have found such a peaceful, brave space to grow in spirit and community here with CCA. **Britt Hicks** (she/they) is a native Texan who has lived all over the state. They are a NAVY veteran and received a BFA in Photography at The Art Institute in San Antonio. **Britt** is a current MDiv student at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, the director of Online ministries for CCOA, and is also a Member in Discernment with the United Church of Christ. They live with their fiancée **Radhika Deshpande Sthanu** and their five dogs, each with five vastly different personalities. There is never a dull moment in their house. A few things that **Britt** enjoys is playing the guitar and cajon, baking, walking, and reading.



11/6/22 New members Anya Toskey and Britt Hicks

Don Miles shares "It looks as though my 38-year experience in Austin, Texas, is coming to a close. I really enjoyed Austin, where I worked at several radio stations and taught 3rd grade in two nearby towns. I'll have nice memories! Before things get busy over the holidays, here are a few things going on at my end: I spent seven nights in the Intensive Care Unit at Baylor Scott & White Hospital in Lakeway. Had to call 9-1-1 on Tuesday, November 15th due to dizziness and trouble breathing. My cell phone did not make it from the emergency room to the ICU, so my son **Richard** tracked it and discovered that it had fallen into the sheets and was aboard a linen truck in Temple, Texas. My daughter and I will be showing up at AT&T Wednesday, November 23rd to get a replacement. I was out-of-touch all

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Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

week! My oldest granddaughter - **Cecelia** - had twins earlier in November. They are boys named **Dietrich** and **Everett**. That gives me seven great-grandchildren. I'll be spending Christmas in Washington, D.C., with my son and daughter-in-law, **Richard** and **Phoebe Miles**, and **Cecelia's** folks who are now new grandparents. My daughter, **Juliette**, was packing things in my apartment all week while I was in the hospital. The movers came during the week after Thanksgiving, and by the end of December they and the family will have me completely moved to Liberty, Missouri, outside of Kansas City. **Juliette** and I visited three cities before deciding on Liberty, based to a great extent on its robust civic and cultural structure. Instead of flying to Texas, **Juliette** will need only a half-hour drive to see me in Liberty. "We will really miss you, **Don**. Promise that you will stay in touch!"



11/22 Don Miles

Congratulations to **Britt** and **Radhika Hicks** who were married on November 12th in a Hindu-Christian ceremony at the Taylor Mansion and honeymooned in Aruba, one beautiful little island. **Radhika** was born in India, grew up in Massachusetts, and has been in Austin since 2007. She works as a veterinarian at Emancipet, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to make basic vet care affordable and accessible to everyone. In her free time, she likes to read, listen to music and listen to true crime podcasts.



11/12/22 Britt and Radhika Hicks at their wedding at the Taylor Mansion



11/15/22 Britt and Radhika Hicks on their honeymoon on the beautiful island of Aruba

Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

On November 11th, **Pam Tucker** was formally inducted into the Academy of Distinguished Chemical Engineers at the University of Texas. The distinction was given in 2020 but inductees for 2020 and 2021 were delayed until the award could be given in person with the 2022 inductees. The celebration was held at the Headliners Club in downtown Austin. **Pam** was joined by **Savanna** and **Harrison** for the dinner and awards. **Sav** and **Harrison** were fascinated by the scene and the amazing accomplishments of the awardees. Years ago, **Pam** taught as a lecturer in the UT Chemical Engineering department, and a few of **Pam's** former chemical engineering students were there: one, a professor in the UT Chemical Engineering department and former chair, one a patent attorney in Houston (awardee), and one a chemical engineering professor at UC Santa Barbara (awardee). **Pam** says it was a wonderful evening and sharing it with the kids made it extra special.



11/11/22 Harrison and Savanna Tucker with their mom Pam at the Academy of Distinguished Chemical Engineers induction ceremony



11/11/22 Inductees of the 2020-22 Academy of Distinguished Chemical Engineers at UT--Pam Tucker on the right

Amy Harris was delighted to have special guests over the Thanksgiving holiday. Her parents were able to fly in from Colorado 2 Wednesdays before Thanksgiving and stayed all the way through the Friday after Thanksgiving. Her sister and her husband and two kids, and two dogs, drove to Austin from Houston. They all stayed at Amy's house from Friday to Sunday, and then everyone else except her brother-in-law stayed until Wednesday. They got to see the Texas History Museum and hang out as a family during the rainy Texas Thanksgiving!



11/20/22 Amy Harris's parents Doug and Karen Harris, sister Katie Manhart and Karen's daughter and Amy's niece Hazel Manhart with Amy

Jaime Hadley had a fun trip in early November. He joined two of his oldest friends on an escapade to San Francisco and Hawai'i. **Jaime's** long-time friend from the band at UT, Dawn, and her husband were making the trip and Jaime tagged along. For three days in San Francisco **Dawn** met face-to-face with some new friends from an adoptees writing group she had been attending virtually for a couple of years, while **Mike** and **Jaime** did things like cable cars, antique ships and e-Sport GoCars. Luckily there were no earthquakes felt, so **Jaime** could calmly enjoy views from tall hotels and great food, including a dinner at Scoma's, as well as a ferry ride and visit to Alcatraz. In Hawai'i the trio stayed for eight days in Honolulu, where **Mike's** niece was spending a semester taking classes at Uni-

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

versity of Hawai'i. On several different days they enjoyed driving all around the island. One day it was shopping and eating on the North Shore as well as dipping their toes into the Pacific and visiting a coffee plantation along the way. Another day they visited Koko Head at the south end of the island. And another day they watched the sun set from Keawaula Beach on the west coast. The views from the Waikiki hotels were spectacular, as was the view from Tantalus Lookout at Pu'u 'Ualaka'a State Park, and **Jaime** saw more rainbows in eight days than he has in eight years in Austin, Texas. The indoor views were great at the Bishop Museum, and Honolulu Museum of Art. **Jaime** dabbled one morning in weaving bracelets from the lauhala leaves, another afternoon took a lesson on how to make the original Mai Tai, and occasionally watched fire dancers at the hotel pool while sipping Hawai'ian rum. The most interesting excursion was probably a day-trip to the big island where the group ascended from sea level and 82 degrees F to 13,000 feet and 40 degrees within an hour to visit the observatories at the peak of Mauna Kea. They also stopped to see the hot lava at the Kilauea crater and walked on the black sand at Punalu'u Beach.



11/6/22 Jaime Hadley in San Francisco near the Hyde Street Pier



11/9/22 Jaime Hadley atop Mauna Kea volcano



11/4/22 Intrepid Jaime Hadley on a cable car in SF



11/9/22 Jaime Hadley perilously close to the hot lava at the Kilauea crater

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Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes



11/12/22 Gorgeous rainbow near Pearl Harbor, O'ahu

Belated 99th birthday congratulations are in order for **George Carruthers**, and they came in a special way. **Marilyn Gaddis** and her husband George Carruthers have been following **Mady Kaye** and "The Beat Divas" since they started "cooking and singing" at Central Market. On Saturday night, October 22nd, they honored **George** on reaching 99 years. **George's** son and daughter-in-law, **Rob** and **Sandra Carruthers**, also enjoyed the delicious food and wine! Family and friends continue to celebrate him, even though his birthday was the 19th of October!



Oct. 22, 2022, Gaddis/Carruthers with The Beat Divas--Marilyn, Mady Kaye, (99!!), Beth Ullman, and Dianne Donovan

Greg Futch writes, "I wanted to pass on some info about us to the good people of the Congregational church. The group picture was taken at the

50th birthday party for our son **Matthew**. **Matt** is doing well, and the two grandkids, **Riley**, eight, and **Alex**, 11, are wonderful, take my word for it!!! And the second photo was taken on Nov. 7th at the church, with you know who! This was the evening of the Waterloo Trio playing at the church after such a long time. I was on a week's trip to Austin, to visit my brother and many friends and relatives. Sorry I did not have the time to come to Sunday service. As a side note, my t-shirt comes from the 150th anniversary of the very progressive Methodist church I attend here in the Denver suburb of Arvada. I miss all of you at the church, and like staying in touch, especially through the newsletter! I will send other news in the future. Peace and blessings to you all. "



11/22 Margaret and Greg Futch on the right and their son Matthew in the center, celebrating his 50th birthday with dear friends in Denver

Photos cont. on the next page

Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes



11/7/22 Reuel and Liz Nash with Greg Futch at the Waterloo Trio concert at the church

Long ago member **David Ashton** reports (referring to the picture with this paragraph), "Hard to believe that 1992 was 30 years ago, but it was. The children are (left to right) **Sarah, Jennie, and Jonathan**. I am holding **Katherine**. **Jonathan** is a lawyer working for the Texas Workforce Commission. **Sarah** is math teacher and coach at Taylor HS, married with two children. **Jennie** is a para-legal, married with one child and one due in late April. **Katherine** is a Captain in the Marine Corps finishing a Master's in Aeronautical Engineering right now and will probably return to piloting helicopters next spring. We have been very blessed. **Susan** retired from teaching in June 2021 and is looking after her dad (**Dick Swallow** who was the architect for our education wing which was dedicated in 1969) and grandkids. I am still working, probably another four or five years. Happy Thanksgiving to all of you."



Thanksgiving Sunday, Nov. 22, 1992--Susan Ashton, Terry Ocean, Pat and Mel Oakes, Winnie Schild, David Ashton holding Katherine, Sarah, Jennie, and Jonathan standing, and?

Recipes for the December Visitor

From **Britt Hicks**

One of my Favorite recipes is Sopapilla Cheesecake

2 cans (8 oz) refrigerated Pillsbury™ Original Crescent Rolls (8 Count)

- **2** packages (8 oz each) cream cheese, softened
- **1 1/2** cups sugar
- **1** teaspoon vanilla
- **1/2** cup butter, melted
- **1** tablespoon ground cinnamon

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease a 9x13-inch baking dish with cooking spray.

1. Beat cream cheese, 1 cup sugar, and vanilla extract in a bowl until smooth. (Add a dash or two of cinnamon if you wish)
2. Unroll crescent roll dough and use a rolling pin to shape each sheet into a 9x13-inch rectangle. Press one piece into the bottom of the prepared baking dish. Evenly spread cream cheese mixture on top, then cover with remaining piece of crescent dough.
3. Mash remaining 3/4 cup sugar, butter, and cinnamon with a fork until combined. Dot mixture over top of dough.
4. Bake in the preheated oven until crescent dough has puffed and turned golden brown, about 30 minutes.
5. Remove from the oven and drizzle with honey. Cool completely in the pan for about 2 hours before cutting into 12 squares

From **Pat Oakes**

Mom's Christmas Crescents

- 2 C butter at room temperature
- 1 C sifted powdered sugar
- 3 1/2 C flour
- 1 C chopped nuts
- 1 t. vanilla

Recipe cont. on the next page

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

Cream butter and sugar together. Add the flour, nuts and vanilla. Cover and chill for 2 or more hours. Take a tablespoon of dough, shape it into a roll and turn into a crescent shape. Place the cookie dough rolls on an un-greased cookie sheet—about 2 dozen per sheet. Bake at 350 degrees until just lightly browned around the edges (about 8-9 minutes). When cool, place 4-6 at a time in a plastic bag with some powdered sugar. Gently move the bag so that they are covered with the sugar. Makes about 6 dozen. **Lois Winter's** favorite Christmas cookies—we always had them at holiday time

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

The candlelight carol service has been a special part of our church calendar for more than 60 years. **Hildegard Kuehne Everett** used to do the decorating of the windows with candles and greenery. **Jaime Hadley** has played a role in decorating the windows in recent years. Rather than be held on Christmas Eve, because so many people were out of Austin then, it was held on the Sunday before Christmas—or maybe two Sundays before Christmas depending on the UT and school calendar. Since many of the early members of the church were from German immigrant families, it is the tradition that we sing the first verse of "Silent Night" in the original German. **Marie Scheel**, our choir director for almost 30 years, didn't care for the hymn "We Three Kings of Orient Are" and insisted that we could only sing the first verse and maybe one more! There are children and grandchildren of **John and Eleanor Towery** who still live in the Austin area and they often make an appearance at the carol service. For more than 30 years the congregation adjourned to the home of **Pat and Mel Oakes** near Zilker Park after the service. They always laughed because **Clark Hubbs** tried his best—and succeeded several times—to get to their home before the **Oakeses** did. Now the congregation adjourns to the fellowship hall to enjoy Christmas treats together after the service. We hope to see you there at 7 p.m. on Sunday, December 18. At this point it is not clear how many more Christmases we will be celebrating together in our familiar surroundings.



12/16/18 A view of the church just before the candlelight carol service