

# THE VISITOR

February 2024

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

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

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**R**ecently, I drove to Austin early one Sunday morning. As I pulled onto the highway from my hotel in Elgin, I was greeted with thick fog, the likes of which I have not seen in a long time. I quickly pulled out my 16-year old memory of driver's education instructions for driving in fog in order to navigate safely to Austin.

I remembered that you can't beat the fog – so I slowed down to what felt like a crawl. And then, when it was hard to see the once familiar landscapes all around me, I followed the median lines in the middle of the road with razor-sharp attention. When one person drove ahead of me, I followed them at a safe distance letting them confront any foggy hazards first, thus using them as a secondary navigational tool. When I saw their brake lights ahead of me, I tapped mine as well.

Just as I took the 290 exit onto I35south, I remembered it included a steep overpass that, on a clear day, makes it feel like I am at the pinnacle of an exciting roller coaster. But in this foggy moment, my excitement was replaced with fear as my 5-year-old self couldn't imagine surviving what seemed like a terrifying foggy Space-Mountain amusement ride. And so, I slowed down some more and trusted my memory of this overpass I had driven hundreds of times before.

I imagined the curves of this incline sans fog in my own virtual reality foggy ride, which allowed me to approach the apex with a thrill as if I had conquered Kilimanjaro itself.

I finally made it safely to my destination but was amazed hours later when I saw that the fog had lifted and had been replaced with a beautiful day. In the clarity of sunshine and safety, I felt as if I could accomplish anything – including my foggy fears of the unknown.

My friends, we are living in a foggy world right now, where we can barely get our footing let alone travel through this chaos. The elements of disinformation, war, and polarization comprise the fog we cannot see. This is not the first time our human-made fog pervades our society, and I'm sure it won't be the last. So what do we do? I think sometimes we approach these challenges as problems that we can solve, which spirals us into hopeless grasping at complex solutions to existential problems. Perhaps we begin with the awareness gleaned in our own fog-induced travels:

- Foggy chaos such as the elements of the war between Israel and the Palestinians is not something we alone can fix. Nor can it be something we ignore and go about traveling in life when we can't see familiar landscapes all around us.
- Thus we must **Slow down**. Acknowledge that the fog of this evil violence prohibits us from traveling at our regular lightning-fast speed.
- **Look for the bold median lines for guidance**. There are people, policies, and wisdom from previous foggy moments that can guide us with the clarity of lines on the road. Follow their guidance.
- **We have neighbors all around us** traveling the same course. Thus, we must watch for neighbors.
- There will be some, who speed by; let them. No one fares well in the fog of war in a race.
- And there will be other neighbors, who safely move forward. Welcome them as traveling companions, who can provide cautionary signals to the danger ahead.
- Finally, when we face a dangerously steep incline of insurmountable challenges related to this war – perhaps hate crimes perpetuated in your community or complicit silence caused by lingering privilege, **trust your Self and visualize the path ahead** as you've traveled hundreds of times before.

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- Take heart that **the fog will eventually lift** to reveal the clarity of a beautiful Beloved Community!

If we follow these foggy reminders, we will eventually make it through to a presence of clarity. The fog may return again, but if we have the survival skills needed, we will not only survive as individuals, we will reach our final destination of healing and wholeness as Beloved Community together. *May it be so, my friends. May it be so.*

*(This piece is my most recent writing on [Substack](#).)*

## March's Visitor Deadline February 23, 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
Member-at-Large	Bill Beardall
Pastor	Ginny Brown Daniel
Dir. of Online Ministries	Open
Director of Music	Laura Martin

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

**O**ur church family suffered a sad loss on January 9, 2024, when **Bill Mueller** died peacefully at Westminster at age 95. He was a longtime member of the church who offered his talents in many ways. His sense of humor was much appreciated! He was a faithful member of the choir. He composed several introits during his lifetime and we look forward to hearing them again during upcoming Sunday services. He was a regular at our church Christmas dinners where he helped serve meals to everyone who came. He was born in San Francisco, CA, on October 21, 1928. He earned his doctorate in electrical engineering at the University of California Berkeley in 1957. **Bill** and his wife **Joan** were married on April 7, 1956—celebrating more than 77 years together. Because of the pandemic, we had not seen **Bill** and **Joan** in a long while, but they were visited by folks from the church who also live at Westminster—and especially **Beth Gleason** every time she was in town. He will be sorely missed.



1/11/09 Doris Williams, Joan and Bill Mueller at coffee hour



4/7/1956 Newlyweds Joan and Bill Mueller on their wedding day



3/4/11 Bill Mueller taught us some great songs at the talent show



5/17/13 Non-Sailors Singing--Bill Mueller, Dennis Murphy, Zoey and Jason Parkhill -- at the talent show

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



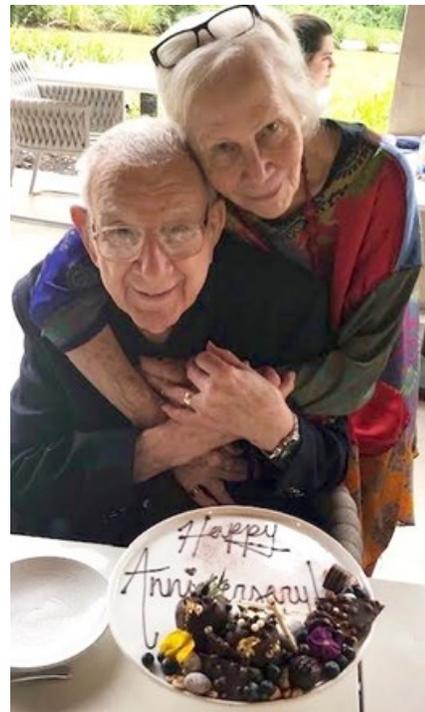
8/17/13 Bill Mueller at church after he had his right index finger amputated because of a stubborn infection--and an additional eye problem. He recalled that a little girl had come up to him at the store and asked if he was a pirate. His only regret was that he hadn't answered "aargh!"



4/3/2016 Bill Mueller, Nodie Murphy, and Ruth Koenig on the Sunday that the church hung the banner celebrating our Muslim neighbors



4/19/15 Joan and Bill Mueller on Bill's retirement Sunday from the choir



On 4/7/19 Bill and Joan Mueller celebrating their 63rd wedding anniversary



4/19/15 Bill Mueller singing with Jason Parkhill, Don Miles, and Dennis Murphy at his choir farewell

January 14th, the church held another quarterly update having to do with property redevelopment plans. Most importantly, the church Task Force On Property Development is working on engaging the most qualified broker/consultant who will assist the church with the technical aspects of finding the most promising developer who will best serve the church's values and mission. Members of the committee include, **Bill Beardall**, chair, **Warinda Harris**, **Roberto Hernandez**, **John Goff**, **Kevin Dietz**, **Pam Tucker**, **Lynne Chavarria**, and **Stephen Russell**.

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



1/14/24 A quarterly update meeting after church discussing property development--seated in the front--Sarah Darter, Lynn Chavarria, Bill Beardall, Pam Tucker, Amy Harris, Stephen Russell, Pastor Ginny Brown Daniel, Liz Nash, Michael Ross, front pew--Warinda Harris, Joy Penticuff, Dave Ross, Michael Ross, 2nd pew-- Mel Oakes, Sara Ross, Sarah Bentley, Barbara Burnham, Laura Martin--Reuel Nash was running the Zoom link.

Epiphany, Saturday, January 6th, 2024, was celebrated in a unique way at 408 W. 23rd St. this year. There was a church work party as it was time to put away Christmas inside and time to spruce up the grounds outside. Working really hard were interim pastor **Ginny Brown Daniel, Reuel and Liz Nash, John Goff, Jonathan Geer and Roberto Hernandez** and their children **Xitlali and Sebastian, Michael Ross, Dave Ross** (also serving as photographer), and **Sara Ross**.



1/6/24 Dave Ross and Roberto Hernandez taking the Christmas tree apart



1/6/24 Jonathan Geer putting Christmas lights in order while Sebastian looks around to see how he can help



1/6/24 Michael Ross taking the lights off of the Christmas tree



1/6/24 Xitlali Hernandez-Geer earnestly sweeping up at the church work party

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



1/6/24 John Goff checking out Reuel Nash's power washing technique while Liz Nash concentrates on pulling weeds



1/6/23 Reuel Nash's power washing gift to your reporter during the work party at the church--we were not able to go since we had unexpected out of town company. The patio looks wonderful now!



1/6/24 Pastor Ginny Brown Daniel showing off her impressive raking skills

**Nodie Murphy** writes, " I'm living at 14430 Triple Crown Lane, San Antonio, TX 78248 and the land line there is 210-764-0201. My cell phone is 512-923-2940." She would love to hear from you. **Nodie** is looking forward to a several week visit from her sister **Missy** who lives in Denver.

Former member **Felicia Scott** shares, "It is hard to believe that **Skye** is a senior this year graduating here in Ann Arbor, MI. Wanted to share with the community, she will be attending Vives University in Bruges, Belgium, studying hospitality management and business. Also, it is special to share as now we hear Rev. **Ginny Brown - Daniel** is at our old church in Austin as she baptized **Skye** as a wiggly two year old and was our pastor when we lived in Houston." Their son **Sterling** is now 15 years old! **Felicia** and **Eliot** and the kids were in Austin from 2010 to 2012. **Felicia** still fondly remembers the wonderful experience of going on the mission trip to El Salvador.



12/12/10 Skye Scott ready for the children's Christmas pageant a few years ago!



3/20/11 Jo Jensen with Felicia and Eliot Scott and their children Skye and Sterling

## Personals (cont.) by Pat Oakes

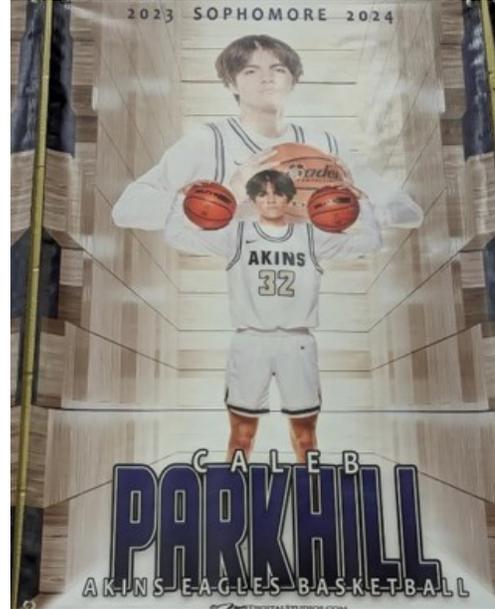


10/23 Skye Scott—a high school senior headed for college at Vives University in Bruges, Belgium in the fall

Interim pastor **Ginny** recently preached a sermon on baptism (a favorite subject of hers) and after the service we were sharing baptism stories—including **Jaime Hadley's** amazing baptism service at Slumber Falls, but we were all surprised when we learned that **Carolyn Thompson** and **Barbara Burnham** (who were the most surprised) were both baptized by the same pastor at the same church. **Barbara Burnham** was christened as an infant at the First Presbyterian Church in Alice, Texas, in 1948, by Rev. **Andrew Byers**. This was her grandmother's church and later became **Barbara's** church. **Carolyn** said she was baptized at around age 12, by the same minister and at the same place. Incidentally, **Barbara** says that church has a beautiful Tiffany window on loan from somewhere in Corpus Christi, she thinks. **Barbara** believes that Rev. **Byers** later came to Austin, to Faith Presbyterian, which **Enid Ross** served for a while.

Proud grandmother **Debby Kohrt** and parents **Jason** and **Kristen Parkhill** are cheering on **Caleb Parkhill**, a sophomore at Akins High School who made the varsity basketball team this year. **Caleb** is the only sophomore on the team and accepted the offer even though he knew he would not get as much playing time. What he has found to be the most beneficial thing about playing with the varsity is that he gets to practice with the older players which is really helping his game. **Caleb's** sister **Zoey** is in the 6th grade at Bailey Middle School, doing well, and is learning how to play the steel drums. **Debby's** grief over the loss of her son Jarod weighs heavily on

her, but she is grateful that she stays in close touch with her daughter-in-law **Laurel** and **Debby's** grandchildren **Wesley** (in kindergarten) and **Brynn** in 4K. They FaceTime every Sunday and enjoy it very much.



1/14/24 Caleb Parkhill, star sophomore at Akins High School

**Pam Tucker** tells us about a new sport for most of us, "Both **Savanna** and **Harrison Tucker** have played Ultimate Frisbee since junior high, and both now play in college. Ultimate is a team sport, played on a field half the width of a soccer field. The offense passes the Frisbee up the field, while the defense tries to intercept or block then throw. The teams score when they are on offense and catch the Frisbee in the end zone. In college, Ultimate is a club sport, with coaches and a budget from the college or university. Austin even has a professional Ultimate team: Austin Sol. **Pam Tucker** is a proud mom, again. The "go to" resource for all things Ultimate is Ultiworld, the premier news media site dedicated to the sport of Ultimate. Ultiworld reports Ultimate news and live-streams higher level games at tournaments. **Pam** often gets to watch **Savanna** play when her games are streamed. The woman who won the highest award for best D1 Ultimate women player last year was **Abby Hecko**, who played for the University of Washington with **Savanna**. This past week, Ultiworld reported the following about **Savanna**. 'With 2023 Callahan winner **Abby Hecko** off and graduated, Washington will need someone to step up to replace her production this year, but they might already have that player ready-made in

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

**Savanna Tucker.** At the 2023 College Championships, **Tucker** was Element's second-leading scorer behind **Hecko** and it frankly wasn't all that close. With twelve goals total, she nearly doubled her next closest teammate (**Amber Lee**, with seven) and added a clean half-dozen blocks as well. **Tucker's** two-way efficiency was elite at times in 2023, and while the loss of **Hecko** will certainly smart for Washington, Element should be able to rest easy knowing one of their standout seniors looks on track for a breakout season."

The **Hernandez-Geer** family enjoyed a wonderful camping trip in Big Bend to celebrate Jonathan's recent January birthday. The kids really enjoy the whole camping experience.



1/17/24 Jonathan Geer's birthday bash in Big Bend with Roberto Hernandez and their children Sebastian and Xitlali

## History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

**J**ust for fun, you might enjoy looking through a variety of Visitors which are on the church Website. If you have old Visitors that are not listed, please send them to me and we will scan them and add them to the site.

<https://www.patandmeloakes.com/PatandMelOakesFamilySite/CAHistory/TheVisitor.html>