

THE VISITOR

March 2022

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Amelia Fulbright



As I've alluded to in recent weeks, our CCA Transition Team has been hard at work. The team, which includes **Warinda Harris, Liz Nash, Pat Oakes, Joy Penticuff, Stephen Russell, Carolyn Thompson** and myself, has met three times in February and March. In this article I'd like to introduce you to what we've been planning.

The Transition Team would like to host the congregation for a series of sessions devoted to learning and to shared reflection about who we are as a congregation and how we live into and out of our values. Each session will cover a value or mission that is already part of our congregation, including:

- 1 Open & Affirming Ministry with the LGBTQ+ Community
- 2 Racial Justice Ministry
- 3 Disability Justice Ministry
- 4 Ministry with children/young families
- 5 Ministry with young adults
- 6 Ministry with the unhoused

During each session, one or more members of the Transition Team will offer a brief presentation on how CCA might live deeper into a particular area of ministry, offering concrete examples of best practices and potential action steps. Following the presentation, I will lead the congregation through an exercise that allows members to reflect (as a group) on three questions:

- 1 What can we celebrate about how CCA has lived into this value/mission?
- 2 What disappointments do we have about what has or has not been done previously in this area of ministry?
- 3 What are our hopes for the future in this area?

I've been doing a lot of listening to church members share some of their disappointments about the church with me, but not so much with each other. From this listening, I have realized that there is a layer of unspoken truths that need to rise to the surface in order to free up energy and creativity that the congregation will need to move forward. These unspoken disappointments actually have a lot to say about what needs attention in order for the church to thrive.

In her latest book, *Atlas of the Heart*, **Brene Brown** writes about disappointments. She says that *disappointments are losses, and losses must be grieved*, and then she goes on to describe why it's important for us to share these losses with each other:

“When someone shares their hopes and dreams with us, we are witnessing deep courage and vulnerability. Celebrating their successes is easy, but when disappointment happens, it’s an incredible opportunity for meaningful connection...Disappointments may be like paper cuts, but if those cuts are deep enough or if we accumulate them over a lifetime, they can leave us seriously wounded. Yes, it takes courage to reality-check, communicate, and dig into the intentions behind our expectations, but that exercise in vulnerability helps us maintain meaningful connection with ourselves and others.”

Schedule of First Three Sessions:

Each of these conversations will take place on a Sunday after church. A light lunch will be served between the end of worship and the beginning of each session. We'll plan to be done around 3:00 pm. Childcare will be provided, and we will provide a virtual option for those who cannot attend in person.

Apr 24, 2022: Open & Affirming Ministry

May 22, 2022: Ministry with Children & Families

Jun 5, 2022: Ministry with Young Adults

My hope is that during these sessions:

- The congregation will gain facility in practicing corporate self-reflection.
- Members will have a brave space to share both hopes and disappointments.
- A more concrete vision for the future ministry/direction of the church may begin to emerge.

As we engage in these courageous conversations, it will be important for us to stay rooted in love and compassion for ourselves and each other. The goal is not to get caught in feeling guilty about past failures or to cast blame on others for past mistakes. We'll want to keep fresh in our minds that we all are still here because we love the Congregational Church of Austin and want to see her thrive. We will simply be trying to engage in the kind of clear-eyed, open-hearted self-reflection that can lead us forward in a more united way. I really hope you'll make plans to join us for these heart-to-heart conversations!

Peace,
Pastor Amelia

April Visitor Deadline March 23, 2022

Church Leadership

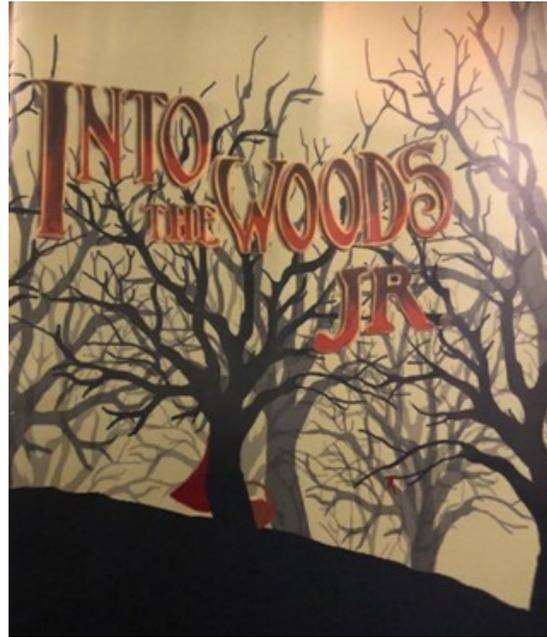
Trustee's Chair	Kevin Dietz
Deacon's Chair	Jen Howicz
Outreach Coordinator	Whit Bodman
Moderator	Joy Penticuff
Treasurer	Pam Tucker
Financial Secretary	Jaime Hadley
Children's Sunday School	Kay Pruett
Youth Sunday School	Jen Howicz
Clerk	Reuel Nash
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Member-at-Large	Bill Beardall
Pastor	Amelia Fulbright
Dir. of Online Ministries	Kyle Riley

Personals by Pat Oakes

Central Texas Interfaith thanks us for being a part of the 2022 Delegates Zoom Assembly/Accountability Session on Sunday afternoon, Feb. 6. This successful event had more than 300 people in attendance (16 of them from our small church!). Clergy and leaders ratified the agenda of issues for 2022 and acknowledged key successes. Issues for CTI include living wages, workforce, education, housing, affordability, homelessness, immigration reform, community health and safety. They were joined by 5 Congressional candidates from districts 35 & 37, with each candidate committing to work with CTI around the CTI agenda of issues. During the meeting, presenters (including **Warinda Harris** and **Joy Penticuff**) discussed ways to invest in the work of CTI, to get involved and to engage in future actions, including non-partisan Get out the Vote efforts.

Will Harris, son of **Warinda** and **John Harris**, younger brother of **Alden**, and grandson of **Barbara Johnson**, has had a really great 8th grade year at Lively Middle School on South Congress Avenue. He has really appreciated the opportunities there in the arts. He had the leading role in his first Broadway show-- **Stephen Sondheim's** "Into the Woods, Jr." (adapted for middle school and high school) playing the **Baker** which had 4 performances over the 3rd weekend of February. The story line involves several Brothers **Grimm** fairy tales intertwined. There were about 25-30 students in the cast with full houses (auditorium holds about 150) each time. **Warinda** was delighted that her mom **Barbara** was able to come with her to one of the performances, and she and **John** each saw it twice—**Alden** went once but had to work or he would have gone twice, too! The backdrop was rented, but parents and students worked on the props. It was choreographed by a student with the long-time choir teacher **Yvette Carroll** and there was another student managing the production. Two students worked with one graphic design teacher and one photo journalism teacher to create the program cover. There was a lot of concern about putting on such a big show and folks were afraid they might have to cancel if folks got sick. But they were very fortunate, and everyone stayed healthy. The masks worn were found online by a parent. It was the kind of mask where one can

see the mouth moving. It was odd looking at first, but it worked—especially since folks could see more of the facial expressions. The Fine Arts Director for AISD commented directly to the faculty there that **Will** had really given a terrific performance! Will is looking forward to being a part of the choral program at Austin High School next school year.



2/20/22 The cover of the program for "Into The Woods Jr." in which Will Harris was a star!



2/20/22 Will Harris in the lead role as The Baker in "Into the Woods"--holding a bag of gold coins from Jack in the Beanstalk and Red Ridinghood's cloak

Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

On Saturday, February 19, the Deacons hosted a cleanup session of the nursery and elementary classroom. A fabulous crew consisting of **Stephen Russell, Scott Neeley, Kay Pruett, John Goff** and **Jen Howicz** came together for a few hours of cleaning and fellowship with a goal of welcoming our youngest back to church with refreshed rooms in which to learn and play. The nursery was purged of old and broken toys and other items. Remaining toys, furniture and linens were scrubbed and laundered. Sadly, due to recent discovery of mold in the elementary classroom, much of its contents are having to be pitched, including the piano, which was unsalvageable. Volunteers in that room did a great job of sorting and clearing items for the mold remediation team to remove. Salvageable furniture and items were thoroughly scrubbed and moved out for storage until the room is ready again. While it was hard to see some of the history go (John found artwork from when he taught almost 15 years ago!), we look forward to a fresh start with our plans for a renewed Christian education program. A huge thank you to our volunteer crew for your time and hard work. Thank you also to those who were unable to come but offered their support.



2/19/22 Elementary classroom - items to be removed.



2/19/22 Stephen Russell and Jen Howicz hard at work cleaning up the nursery



2/19/22 The measuring wall that marked the growth of our youth for so many years!

The **Dierksen's** are delighted to still be a family of three (at this writing). **Faye** is still on partial bed rest and continues to take it easy. The whole household had mild cases of Covid last month—even **Faye's** mom **Cameon**, but all are doing well now. Fortunately, everyone but **Deek** was fully vaccinated. The due date is April 20th, but Baby **Dierksen** will likely be early. The sad news for us is that the **Dierksen** family is planning to move to the Syracuse, NY, area and are in the process of closing on a house. The IVF treatments have been at a major center in Syracuse, and they want to be closer to that area. They promise that they will stay in touch!

Barbara Burnham was delighted to be able to get back to her South Austin group's regular monthly meeting of Project Linus, a non-profit organization which makes new blankets for needy

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

children. They had 35 people the meeting and processed 194 blankets! **Barbara's** job is sewing Project **Linus** labels on the donated blankets and quilts.

Don Miles' daughter **Juliette's** husband and son both have important milestones coming up in their careers. His son-in-law **Marlin** retired from the FBI on February 18. He was with them at the Branch Davidian scenario in Waco, at the Oklahoma City bombing, at the USS Cole bombing and as leader of the Hostage Rescue Team. He also served as a body-guard for former FBI directors **Louis Freeh** and **Robert Mueller**. He was their man at the US Embassy in Pakistan and has most recently been the FBI's man at the Pentagon. **Juliette** was also with him in the FBI for a number of years. Their son, **Garrett**, graduates from the FBI Academy this semester, and will begin his duties at their office in Topeka, Kansas. They are certainly a family with a serious commitment and dedication to this country and to the FBI. We all thank them!



2/15/22 Betty Bodman, intrepid skier, in Whitefish, Montana



2/12/22 Arlo and Otis Bodman playing in a "fort" made of boxes



2/15/22 Arlo and Otis Bodman enjoying some good books



2/15/22 Arlo and Otis Bodman "helping" their mom Erin in the kitchen

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

Debby Kohrt once again participated in the Cabo San Lucas Smiles International Foundation Mission in February 2022. **Debby** has been serving as a nurse in the program, going to Cabo (sometimes twice a year) since at least 2015. This surgical mission was successful in performing surgery on children with cleft lip and palate. Unfortunately, **Debby's** trip was cut short due to her gravely ill dog **Izzy**. She flew home several days early to be home with her. **Izzy** was diagnosed with hemolytic anemia, (immature red blood cells destroys good red blood cells) and unfortunately, she passed in her sleep at home on February 14th. She was only five years old and so much a part of the family—her grandchildren **Caleb** and **Zooley** adored her and did get to spend some time with her before she passed. They are begging **Debby** for a new puppy! **Debby** will be going back to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, in August for another mission.

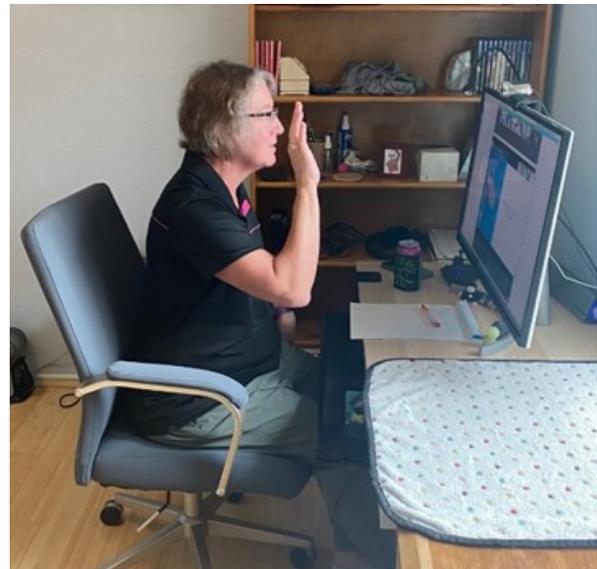


5/19 Debby Kohrt's beloved Izzy

Gail Christeson reports, "I started a new position as a Program Director at the National Science Foundation (NSF) in December. Now instead of submitting proposals to NSF I manage the merit review process and help decide which proposals should be recommended for funding. It is a great new challenge! The position is based out of Alexandria, Virginia, but is currently 100% remote. **John** and I will soon be looking at condos in the DC area and plan to split our time between Virginia and Austin once there is a return to office."



2/12/22 Debby Kohrt (right) with two staff members preparing a baby for surgery through Smiles International



12/6/21 Gail Christeson taking her oath of office (from home) which is required of all federal employees according to the US Constitution

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

Fran and **Rambie Briggs** ventured out last week for the first time in two years with a trip to South Padre Island. They visited with **Rambie's** cousins **John** and **Pat Nichols** (Wisconsin winter Texans) who took them bird watching. They really enjoyed visiting the Turtle Rescue Center and eating lots of seafood. They also enjoyed great weather to walk on the beach and also saw the full moon rise over the Gulf.



2/22 Fran Briggs at South Padre Island



2/22 Rambie Briggs at South Padre Island

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

Former member **Carol Barrett** dropped off some papers related to the church recently and one of them seemed very pertinent to our discussions about the future of our church community now. The link listed below is an Austin-American Statesman article from 25 year ago. I encourage all of you to read it. There are also some great pictures of our community from long ago.

https://www.patandmeloakes.com/PatandMelOakesFamilySite/CCAHistory/AustinAmericanStatesman9_13_97.html