

# THE VISITOR

March 2024

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

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

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**S**ix months! We have been in ministry together for six months! Woohoo! I hope you (and I) hear that we are doing great ministry together. It's not easy, but your commitment to bring your authentic selves to our conversation, studies, visioning, meetings and worship is amazing. Thank you!

Six months of ministry together also means six months of driving up and down Highway 290 to and from Austin each week. Woohoo! Some of you have asked what I listen to on my commutes. Sometimes, I listen to silence just to let my thoughts have space to breathe. Other times, I listen to the news from the [Texas Standard](#) and [Y'allitics](#) (a podcast specifically about Texas politics).

When I get on the road, I often need something that's not "work related" but still peaks my non-churchy interests. I love biographies so I have been listening to two Audible books about the Astors and Vanderbilts written by **Anderson Cooper** (I loved those books primarily because I respect **Anderson's** journalism and love his voice!). I even listened to all 42 hours of **Barbra Streisand's** memoir! That took me a few months. I recommend it, but I think she needed someone to edit her memoir. I also love movies and tv, so I have been listening to a few podcasts such as [Smartless](#) (with Jason Bateman, Sean Hayes and Will Arnett) as well as [Literally! With Rob Lowe](#). I also found a few Texas podcasts like [Austin Found](#) and [Texas Wine and True Crime](#) that are interesting.

If you have any podcasts, Audible books, or music you recommend, I am always open to suggestions! I am so grateful for time to think, process, and engage the non-churchy parts of my brain and spirit! I look forward to many more trips to come in our ministry together!

Blessings, **Ginny**

**April's Visitor Deadline March 29, 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

In a new, concerted effort to acquaint folks in our neighborhood (who are mostly students) with who we are, Pastor **Ginny** along with **Liz Nash**, **Shelby Nowland**, and **Lynn Chavarria** set up a table on 23rd St. by our church entrance on Ash Wednesday (also Valentine's Day) and imposed ashes and/or gave out cookies to passersby. Thanks to **Pam Tucker**, **Pat Oakes**, **Lynn Chavarria**, **Joy Penticuff** and **Liz Nash** who made cookies for the occasion and thanks to whoever created the greeting tag with each bag of cookies which told a few things about the church and when our worship services are scheduled. That evening an Ash Wednesday service was held at 7 p.m. at the church for the first time in many years. While sparsely attended, there was wonderful music, good preaching and shared communion. **Sebastian** and **Xitlali Hernandez-Geer** were an integral part of the service.



2/14/24 Shelby Nowland imposing ashes on Lynn Chavarria's forehead on Ash Wednesday



2/14/24 Pastor Ginny ready for Ash Wednesday in front of the church



2/14/24 Lynn Chavarria and Shelby Nowland on Ash Wednesday/Valentine's Day--ashes and cookies for students and passersby



2/14/24 Ash Wednesday evening service at church with Pastor Ginny and Xitlali

## Personals (cont.) by Pat Oakes

**Reuel** and **Liz Nash** lifted up hundreds of prayers (literally) on Saturday morning, Feb. 17th, in preparation for installing our new prayer net. **Jo Jenson** introduced the idea of the prayer net in 2012 during Lent (12 years ago!) — and the practice has become an integral part of our church community. We are so grateful to **Jo** for sharing the idea with us.



4/8/12 The prayer net on Easter Sunday before church--the idea was brought to us by Jo Jenson — 12 years ago



2/17/24 Liz Nash working on getting the last hook ready to install



2/17/24 Reuel Nash installing the hooks to hold the first prayer net



2/18/24 Look carefully at the bottom of the new prayer net and you will see a lavender tie at the very bottom left tied by Xitlali Hernandez-Geer

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



2/18/24 More prayer ties added during and after the service.

**Betty Bodman** writes, "**Andrea Low** and I joined the annual UCC Cuba study seminar which has been happening for many years and which was mentioned to us by **Liz Nash** who went on the trip in 2023. The trip was organized by a minister from Greensboro, NC, **Tom Warren**, and his wife, **Kim**. We had our own driver and bus plus a tour guide who was our event/meal/housing coordinator as well as our translator. All of this was helpful as traveling in Cuba offers some particular restrictions based in part on what the US government allows US citizens to do in Cuba. We had a full but not overwhelming daily schedule that included meeting with representatives from government agencies and visiting tourist sites. We met with - among other things - the Latin American Medical School, the Literacy Museum, the staff at a local medical clinic and attended a party held by the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution; we had a walking tour through old Havana and saw notable monuments. A high point was staying in the private homes of Cubans who rent out rooms along the lines of a B&B or Airbnb. I was happy to find my rusty Spanish was enough to communicate when I needed to. I was impressed with how many people we talked with who take real pride in the social systems Cuba has created even as they recognize the very real problems their country faces. My bottom line take-away from the trip is that the

embargo the US government enforces has no real use or benefit to the US and does real harm to the population in Cuba. Unfortunately, with all the foreign policy concerns we have at present, I doubt our relationship with Cuba is at the top of anyone's list."



2/9/24 Betty Bodman (flying in from New Jersey) and Andrea Haksoon Low (who flew in from Austin) met up at the Holiday Inn at Miami International Airport enjoying getting caught up before heading for Cuba the next day (Andrea photo)



2/24 Betty Bodman and Andrea Low by the Santiago Bay Cuba sign in Havana (Andrea's photo)

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



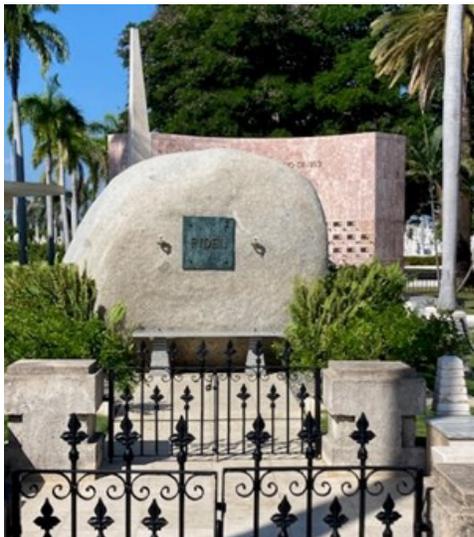
2/24 Andrea Haksoon Low and Betty Bodman at the Santiago Bay, Cuba, sign (Andrea's photo)



2/24 Cobblestone streets in Old Havana (Betty's photo)



2/24 Overlooking Havana (Betty's photo)



2/24 A monument to Fidel Castro in Havana

Friday, February 16th, was a very special day for the **Hernandez-Geer** family. **Roberto Hernandez** became a US. citizen at a ceremony here in Austin. There were 51 new citizens here in Austin that day! **Roberto** who is from Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico, moved to the U.S. on May 23, 2005. **Roberto** graduated from the universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León ( the biggest public university in the state of Nuevo León) with an architectural bachelor degree in 2000. As you can see from the photo, the whole family was pretty excited!



2/16/24 Roberto Hernandez became a US citizen--Jonathan, Sebastian, and Xitlali joined him with the judge in the photo

## Personals (cont.) by Pat Oakes

**Jaime Hadley** had been in Provo, UT, on business and had gone early—spending the Sunday of the church annual meeting (Feb. 4th) in Salt Lake City at the Mormon Tabernacle for Music and the Spoken Word with a 300 member choir. He was supposed to be home on Saturday, the 10th, in time to be worship leader, but was delayed on his way home and did not get home until Sunday night. He called Pastor **Ginny** when he realized he would not make it. She quickly drafted Rev. **Shelby Nowland** (who is the current director of Labyrinth) when he arrived for the service that morning. Thanks, **Shelby!**

We did not get the obituary for our beloved member **Bill Mueller** before last month's deadline. Here is the link to learn more about **Bill's** long and wonderful life. <https://www.statesman.com/obituaries/paco0719123>

It was a joy to have Rev. **John Gage** visit the church on Feb. 25. He is in town for a three month sabbatical from his UCC church in Needham, MA, and remembers well that he was ordained under the sponsorship of our church 24 years ago. He is here to visit family and friends, especially his parents **Les** and **Winnie Gage**. **Les** and **Winnie** (who have been married almost 70 years) are working on getting moved into a retirement community and **John** is here to help with the process.



2/25/24 Rev. John Gage with Liz Nash here in Austin on sabbatical from his UCC church in Needham, MA

Our own **Debby Korht** looks forward to her trips to Cabo San Lucas for Smiles International twice a year. Check out this Web site [http://www.smilesinternationalfoundation.org/smiles\\_of\\_cabo\\_san\\_lucas0.aspx](http://www.smilesinternationalfoundation.org/smiles_of_cabo_san_lucas0.aspx) and you will get some idea of what the group does. **Debby** works as a scrub nurse and stays very

busy. In the photo she is in the second row from the front and in the front row right is her good friend from Michigan, **Tricia Hunter**, who invited her to volunteer with her when **Debby** started in 2015. **Debby** apologized for not knowing everyone's name in the picture or their jobs, but really appreciates the hard work the volunteers at Smiles International put in. The director of her team is Dr. **Jeff Moses** (center front with his wife **Maribel** who is also a part of the staff to the left). The woman front left is a doctor from Cabo San Lucas. The lead surgeon is Dr. **Fahrad** seated in the green scrubs on the left middle. The orthodontist is in the maroon on the back row, the woman next to him is from Poland and speaks fluent Spanish, and Dr. **Wilson** in red is the anesthesiologist. A small hospital in Cabo donates the use of their two surgical rooms to Smiles International who use it as efficiently as possible while they are there. **Debby** notes that they really don't know what they will find when they get there. Folks from as far as 500 miles away bring their children for maxillofacial surgeries—some surgeries are much more complex and take longer, so they never are quite sure how many children they will be able to treat.



2/24 Our intrepid Debby Kohrt (2nd from the front on the right) has been going to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, since 2015 (missing one year for Covid) on mission trips for Smiles International

If you haven't had time to see this, you might enjoy watching this video of **Jonathan Briggs**, son of **Fran** and **Rambie Briggs**, who is the new Director of Client Services at Back Bay Mission. He is very excited about the work he is doing in Mobile <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDDvYRdeT2Y>

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

Our long-ago wonderful centenarian (101+) former church member **Eunice Paul** (here in Austin from England with her husband Rev. **Bob Paul** who taught at the Austin Presbyterian Seminary from 1977-1987) decided at the beginning of September that she could no longer cope with just occasional day care in her beautiful large apartment, so she made the decision to move into a care home in Reigate, Surrey, UK. Her daughter **Lydia Tapley** (who lives nearby) reports that on Sunday, Jan. 28, "unfortunately, **Eunice** fell and broke one of the bones in her spine. After a few days in hospital, she returned to the care home. They have spent the last week trying to manage her pain relief as the fracture also caused muscle spasm, so it has been a difficult few days. But, we think they've now got her sorted and although she sometimes sounds like she is "away with the fairies" she is, on the whole still perfectly compos mentis. She is having trouble, sitting up, at the moment, however, so holding her iPad to read or write emails, is not yet feasible." **Lydia** suggests that if you would like to send her an e-mail, to copy her on the e-mail so that

she can be sure that **Eunice** gets the message. **Eunice's** e-mail is [eunice.paul@talktalk.net](mailto:eunice.paul@talktalk.net) and **Lydia's** email is [lydia.tapley@me.com](mailto:lydia.tapley@me.com). More recent word from **Lydia** on Feb. 24th says "The morphine has been withdrawn as her pain has receded, so she is becoming more her old self, day by day. From lying flat for four and a half weeks and being spoon fed, to now sitting up and feeding herself! Real progress, and all in three days! Now she is just limited by her loss of confidence which, I'm sure, will strengthen as her body strengthens. She is one determined lady!" We wish you well, **Eunice!!!!**

**Warinda Harris** had a wonderful time on her first ever cruise — five day Carnival cruise in the Caribbean. The occasion was to celebrate her sister **Tiffany's** birthday. She and five family members traveled to Costa Maya and Cozumel. They watched the Super Bowl from the Lido deck and celebrated Mardi Gras aboard ship! **Warinda** loved the blue waters of the Caribbean.



2/13/24 Warinda Harris and her sister Tiffany Johnson celebrating Mardi Gras in style on a cruise in the Caribbean!

## History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes



**H**ildegard 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 and refrigerate 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 un-boiled 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 your family/friends with your Easter creations. Enjoy! Happy Easter!!