

THE VISITOR

May 2025

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

408 West 23rd St. Austin, Texas 78705-5214
(512) 472-2370

E-mail: office@congregationalchurchofaustin.org

Web site: congregationalchurchofaustin.org

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Ginny Brown Daniel, Interim Pastor



I didn't mean to walk far this morning.

I just needed air, movement—anything to help me shake off the weight of our sad national reality. But creation had other plans. The path, like a quiet invitation, curved gently ahead of me, and I followed it without asking where it led.

That's when I looked up and saw *this*.

A sky flushed with pinks and violets, like the horizon had been scribbled over by some dreamy, distracted god. Clouds gathered in quiet drama, as if the weather itself was pausing to watch the morning begin. The trees stood still.

Everything in me slowed.

It's strange, isn't it? How healing can sneak up on you—not with a thunderclap, but with a curve in the road and a soft color you almost miss. In that moment, nothing demanded to be done. No inbox. No news. No clock ticking too fast. Just the path, the sky, and me, breathing.

There's something sacred about walking without a goal. Not rushing, not measuring, just moving. I think we forget how much our souls need that kind of stillness. This photo is just a glimpse, a snapshot of what it felt like to return to myself for a little while.

So this morning, I walked into peace. Not all of it stayed with me—but enough did.

And maybe that's all we need sometimes. Just enough.

Thanks for wandering with me.

Midsummer Visitor Deadline July 26, 2025

Church Leadership

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Trustee's Chair | Bill Campbell |
| Deacon's Chair | Roberto H. & Sarah D. |
| 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 | Serge Martinez |
| Director of Music | Laura Martin |

Personals
by Pat Oakes

John Goff is delighted to share news of the Christeson/Goff family. Here is the Goff triplet update (**John** and **Gail's** triplet grandsons who were born very early at 27 weeks). **John** says, "The triplets continue to thrive and grow (the proud parents are **Amber** and **Cameron Goff**). They're nearly sitting up on their own, and can hold their own bottle. Mom dressed them up for Easter photos, and they're just too cute. From left to right (90% sure) they are **Bennet, William and Lelan.**" **John** continues, "**John** and **Gail** are back from a two-week trip to Portugal. They did a 'self driving' tour where the travel agency arranges all the lodging and **John** and **Gail** drove a rental car all around the country to see all the beautiful sights. Those include: the cities of Lisbon and Porto, with amazing old narrow streets and vibrant waterfronts; the rugged central coast, where they stayed at an eco-resort/spa and **John** had his first massage ever; the Douro River valley, home to amazing vineyards producing both port and wines; the mountainous Serra de Estrella region, with spectacular scenery and amazing hikes; and the Alentejo region, home of clay-pot wineries and innumerable cork-bark oak trees.



4/25 John Goff and Gail Christeson in scenic Portugal

We have really enjoyed having **Charlie Bernacchio** and **Catherine Hannon** in our midst this year. **Catherine** writes, "We are in Austin until the end of May. We live in Falmouth, Maine. We came here to help our daughter and son-in-law with our grandson, **Jack!** **Jack** began school (kindergarten) in September. It was his first time in school and he has extensive food allergies. He was home schooled by a certified elementary teacher. So this was our chance and we have loved it! We learned of CCA from our minister in Falmouth who visited when he was here. All the members are so welcoming! We find Rev. **Ginny** so inspiring, and the music ministry is quite amazing. Since attending worship services in the fall, we are very happy here."



4/25 From left to right (90% sure) they are Bennet, William and Lelan.



4/13/25 Charlie Bernacchio and Catherine Hannon have been visiting with us from Maine since the fall, but will be headed home to Maine in May



4/25 John Goff and Gail Christeson in the mountainous Serra de Estrella region of Portugal

Personals (cont.)
by Pat Oakes

Maggi Tucker was part of a great celebration at First Congregational Church in Houston on Palm Sunday. She recounts, "On Palm Sunday First Congregational Church of Houston celebrated its 70th anniversary. The church was started by two lay people - **Tom and Wyn Greacen**. **Tom** was the architect of the church's Meeting House. The **Greacen's** were active members until their deaths. I was privileged to be part of the day's festivities. It was great to see lots of friends. For many years my husband **Bob** and I were very involved with that congregation - **Bob** as Senior Minister for twenty-eight years and I as Minister of Music for twenty years. The celebration was very well planned and was carried out by many volunteers. The day started with a joyful worship service. Almost everyone attending wore a bright blue tee shirt, provided by the church's endowment. This was followed by a potluck lunch, a great display of the church's history and games for children and adults (the adult games were Trivia and Bingo, with questions and clues based on FCC's history). Add the perfect weather and it was altogether a great day." **Maggi**, who lives at The Triangle in central Austin, leaves right after church to get back in time for Sunday dinner, so many of us have not been able to visit with her. She says, " I was born and raised in South Dakota. She says," I attended Yankton College for two years, after which **Bob** and I were married. We moved to Chicago where he finished seminary and I finished my bachelor's degree in organ at The American Conservatory of Music. We spent six years in De Smet, SD, where Bob was minister of two Congregational churches. We, then, moved to Turkey, where we were teachers in two UCC mission schools for five years. In 1971 we moved to Houston where we lived for 52 years. During that time I earned two masters degrees from the University of Houston - in Cultural Anthropology and Choral Conducting. I have three adult children, two of whom live permanently in Austin and the third lives here half the year. In addition to being a Minister of Music, I am co - editor of a hymnal and the composer of choir anthems, handbell music and hymn tunes (two of which are in the Glory to God hymnal used by CCofA). **Bob** died October 6, 2023 and I moved to the Village at the Triangle on December 1st. I started attending The Congregational Church of Austin early in 2024. I am glad to be in both places." Maggi has found a piano duet partner at the Triangle and they enjoy all genres of music. Right now they are working on a summer recital of Broadway tunes.



4/13/25 First Congregational of Houston celebrated its 70th anniversary on Palm Sunday



4/25 Maggi Tucker (right) with piano duet partner Karen Anderson after their spring recital at The Triangle

Jonathan and Roberto Hernandez-Geer have completed their move to Monterrey, Mexico, where they will live near **Roberto's** parents for the next several years. They both want **Xitlali** and **Sebastian** get to know their grandparents and other family members there and for their children to become fluent in Spanish. **Jonathan** was glad to note that their trip to Monterrey was uneventful and there were no delays when they crossed the border.

Personals (cont.) by Pat Oakes

On a beautiful, cool, sunny morning on April 12th at San Marcos City Cemetery, the ashes of **George Clarence Carruthers** (October 19, 1923 - March 14, 2025) were interred in the **Carruthers** family plot with full military honors—including a thunderous flyover by two jets side by side. **George** served in the Air Force from 1941 and retired as a Lt. Colonel in 1972. In 1943 on Bastille Day, serving as a bombardier in a plane over France with a crew of 11, the plane was shot down, he survived along with 3 others, and was captured by the Germans and spent the rest of the war in a German POW camp. For more information about **George**, use this link.

<https://www.patandmeloakes.com/GeorgeCarruthers.html#carruthers>

George and his wife **Marilyn Gaddis** were very active in our church for many years. **Marilyn** will be 97 on the 27th of June and is doing well.



4/12/25 George Carruthers' funeral in San Marcos with full military honors and an inspiring DEI presence



4/12/25 Mel and Pat Oakes with Marilyn Gaddis at the lunch which followed George Carruthers' celebration of life service

Two long ago members of the church have died recently. **Eunice Paul**, a member of the church along with her husband Rev. **Bob Paul** (1918-1992) who was on the faculty at Austin Presbyterian Seminary from 1977-1987, died at age 102+ in April 2025. Her ashes were interred at Clandon Wood Natural Burial Ground in Surrey, England. The service was live-streamed on Facebook and **Mel** and **Pat Oakes** were able to watch it. Another long-ago member (when **John Towery** was pastor of this church) has died—**Dennis Schneider**. **Dennis** and his wife **Kazuko** (who died of early onset-Alzheimer's some years ago) lived in Tokyo where he taught for many years. He was a member of the Tokyo Union Church and sang in the choir. Their daughter **Takako** was born in Austin while **Dennis** was in school at UT. His memorial service will be at the Tokyo Union Church in July. **Takako** is supposed to send the link for the service to me, which I will post at the proper time.

The Sunday after Easter was devoted to highlighting some of the talented folks in our congregation. The gifted 88-year-old pianist **Maggi Tucker** played "Butterfly" by **Edvard Grieg**. **Barbara Burnham** read a beautiful, evocative poem by Alberto Rios — "Heading North Through the Sonoran Desert" reminding us of the trauma of the immigrants. **Lucy Erda** told a moving family story about her mother. **Carolyn Thompson** used a carved wooden vase as a metaphor for how to look at things differently and see different possibilities. **Mel Oakes** shared the history of the **Norman Potter** memorial window on the cello side of the church. **Bill Beardall** sang and played the guitar featuring the song "You Got to Move." **Sarah Darter** spoke eloquently about the perilous times in which we are living, how we all need to speak out for due process for people taken to El Salvador, and how hope lingers here.

Rev. Rollin Russell, a longtime member of our church family, who now lives in Asheville, NC, shares, "I have been working on a memoir for years, but intensively over the past months. It is now in publication, and I hope you will consider ordering it, and if you enjoy it and are so inclined, recommend it to your friends. Many of you have been an important part of my life, and you will find out information I rarely shared regarding incidents of which you may be familiar. This is the link that works to purchase my book. Thank you for your interest. Rollin"

[https://shop.ingramspark.com/b/084?](https://shop.ingramspark.com/b/084?params=a85u9WgjqXUr6ynCHgxo3phk1nev87Lz6R)
[params=a85u9WgjqXUr6ynCHgxo3phk1nev87Lz6R](https://shop.ingramspark.com/b/084?params=a85u9WgjqXUr6ynCHgxo3phk1nev87Lz6R)

Personals (cont.)
by Pat Oakes

We've been missing **Stephen Russell** (yes—his dad is **Rollin Russell**) this year while he was on sabbatical in Tucson, AZ, with his husband **Scott Neely**. He will be the new Arizona State Foundation Professor and Director of the T. Denny Sanford School of Social and Family Dynamics beginning in July. We are very happy for **Stephen**, but very sad for us. **Stephen** will be in Austin the weekend of May 10th–11th for UT's graduation ceremonies and is planning on being at church on the 11th. Plan now to be there.

Mel and **Pat Oakes** were delighted to have their three daughters home for a few days at Easter—**Beth** coming in from Iowa City, **Sarah** from Arlington, VA, and **Mardie** from San Francisco. It was the first time that all three of them came home at the same time in many years!



4/18/25 The 5 of us had a delicious dinner at Saffron, a Nepali restaurant in SW Austin—Sarah, Beth, Mel, Pat, and Mardie

Easter at CCoA by Pat & Mel Oakes

Continuing a tradition of more than 20 years, we continued the tradition of flowering the cross on Easter Sunday which was brought to us by Marilyn (aka Madeleine) Vaché. Thanks to Mardie Oakes who took the pictures of the process.



4/20/25 Charlie Bernacchio and Dave Ross flowering the cross on Easter Sunday — Marilyn Vaché (aka Madeleine) brought the tradition to us more than 20 years ago.



4/20/25 The Dietz family--Kevin, Rachel, Isabella, and Francesca (missing John) -- flowering the cross on Easter Sunday



4/20/25 Maggi Tucker and Bill Beardall flowering the cross on Easter Sunday



4/20/25 John Goff, Carolyn Thompson, and Dana? visiting from Iowa helping to flower the cross

Easter at CCoA by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.



4/20/25 Catherine Hannon and Jaime Hadley putting finishing touches on the flowered cross



4/20/25 Easter Sunday with Roberto and Jonathan, Xitlali and Sebastian and Pastor Ginny Brown Daniel



4/20/25 Victoria Li and Bill Campbell flowering the cross



4/20/25 Jonathan and Roberto with their farewell carrot cake

Easter at CCoA by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.



4/20/25 After the Easter egg hunt--Jonathan Hernandez-Geer, child caregiver Ann Ables, Xitlali and Sebastian Hernandez Geer and Roberto Hernandez Geer



4/20/25 Roberto, Sebastian, Xitlali, Jonathan Hernandez-Geer with Sarah Darter and the troll Malin in Pease Park where they had a farewell party on Easter afternoon



4/20/25 Farewell party given by the Hernandez-Geer family at Pease Park--Jonathan, Tony Rogers, our former cellist, Amy Harris, our fabulous violinist, and Robin Rosson, another former cellist