

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

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**Rev. Amelia Fulbright, Transitional Pastor**

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## **Singing is a practice, not a product**

“Imagine a collective, multi-genre movement in voice pedagogy away from a model of *assumed deficiency* and toward a model of *assumed wholeness*” - **Megan Durham**, Respire Vocal Wellness

The above quote stopped me in my tracks and brought to mind so many questions. What is the value of music in our community? What essential human need does it address? What spiritual significance does it hold? What is its purpose in our church? Navigating the pandemic as an educator, performer, and worshiper, I found myself considering those questions with a new level of curiosity and urgency than ever before. I clearly remember the moment I mourned the disruption of our collective singing experience. The deep ache of loss that settled in my chest was anxiety-inducing. Why? Why did it matter? Virtual choirs were almost instantly appearing and inspiring millions. We have countless recordings of the greatest artists. Most formally trained musicians like myself had the resources to make quality recordings at home to enhance the online worship experience. Really, what was it that we had lost?

Singing is not a product, but a practice. As an educator, I have often encountered parents and students, even fellow educators who confidently declare that they or their child “can’t sing” and don’t belong in a choir. It amazes me how firmly we as a community hold on to the belief that only “talented” singers deserve to sing. How can that be when music is so integral to our well-being? The health benefits of singing alone or in communion with others are undeniable. From the regulating effect of purposeful breathing to the comforting benefit of steady, repeated rhythms, our brains and bodies and souls respond positively to song. Much like yoga, academic pursuits, or meditation, I consider singing to be a spiritual, intellectual, and physical practice. As the above quote suggests, many of us are accustomed to the idea of “assumed deficiency.” I am not athletic; therefore, I do not belong in this yoga studio. I am not knowledgeable in physics, so I do not deserve to attend this lecture. I question my faith, so I am not welcome in a place of worship.

So, what does it mean to assume wholeness instead? We must know and recognize our inherent worth. To shift our perspective away from self-deficiency means questioning why a space feels inaccessible. Who allowed you to believe you do not deserve the experience of singing?

As an educator, a director, and a community member, I find myself pursuing the mission of making the musical experience both accessible and meaningful to people of any background, level of training, or “talent.” That, as it turns out, is the true significance of dedicated training in choral conducting and music education, far more than technique and alignment with classical western European music standards. For what we all need, more than the installation of rules and expectations for our voices, is permission to experience, and knowledge that the gift of our voices is everything it should be. In worship, in community, in personal practice we arrive fully deserving and worthy of the holy experience of singing. As I begin my tenure as the director of music at Congregational Church of Austin, that is my hope: to invite *all* into a musical communion where we are welcomed and deserving, much as we are all invited into God’s community of love.

Director of Music  
Laura Martin

**December Visitor Deadline November 28, 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	Britt Hicks

## Personals by Pat Oakes

Our church community suffered a great loss in late September. **Jo Jensen** posted the following obituary on Facebook. "On Wednesday, September 28, 2022, **Robert Paul Garrett**, devoted and intensely beloved husband of Jo Jensen, transitioned from this world at the age of eighty-three. **Bob** was born in Del Rio, Texas, to **Olean** and **Andrew Garrett**. After graduating from Del Rio High School, he attended Texas A & M University for one year before receiving an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Along with his fellow West Point cadets, **Bob** was honored to march in the inaugural parade of President **John F. Kennedy**, who was also the guest speaker at **Bob's** USMA graduation in 1962. After graduation **Bob** served in and subsequently retired from the U.S. Army after twenty years, which included two tours of Vietnam, where he served as commander of the 1st and 27th Company B Infantry Regiment (Wolfhounds). **Bob** earned numerous medals during his military career: Silver Star, Legion of Merit, five Bronze medals, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service, and several other Service Commendations. He was most proud of his medal for being Commander of Company B, 1st and 27th Infantry. Additionally, **Bob** authored the book, **A Wolfhound Reminiscs**, depicting the three-day Vietnam Battle of Attleboro. **Sue Butterick** (his first love) and **Bob** were married in 1962 and welcomed two remarkable daughters: **Laura Ellen Driscoll** of Deerfield, New Hampshire, and **Amy Elizabeth Gliniak** (husband, **Matthew Gliniak, Jr.**) of Southampton, MA **Bob** is

also survived by his brother, **Lynn Garrett** and brother-in-law, **James Davis** of McKinney, Texas; a grandson, **Gary Driscoll**; two great-grandchildren **Lilly** and **Nathan Driscoll**; a nephew, **Jason Garrett McLean** of Waxahachie, Texas; and a niece, **Andrea McLean Beckner** of Little Elm, Texas. **Bob** was predeceased by his sister, **Deborah Garrett McLean** in 2001. **Bob** also served as Chief Information Officer for Cal Farley's Boys Ranch in Amarillo, Texas, for eight years and retired in 2004. After meeting the love of his life, **Jo**, they married and settled in Austin, Texas, where **Bob** never met a cut of meat he couldn't make taste more delicious by marinating, grilling or smoking! This kind, patient, and humble glass-half-full man whose personal philosophy was 'just do the next right thing,' will be inurned at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York, following a private memorial service there at a future date." Take a few minutes to read from this link.

[https://www.amazon.com/Wolfhound-Reminiscs-Robert-P-Garrett/dp/1791609724/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=1T3H8BKI7C1Y0&keywords=A+wolfhound+Reminiscs&qid=1666144942&qu=eyJxc2MiOiIyLjE3IiwicXNhIjojMC4wMCIsInFzcCI6IjAuMDAiIjQ%3D%3D&s=books&sprefix=a+wolfhound+reminiscs%2Cstripbooks%2C88&sr=1-1&asin=1791609724&revisionId=&format=4&depth=1](https://www.amazon.com/Wolfhound-Reminiscs-Robert-P-Garrett/dp/1791609724/ref=sr_1_1?crid=1T3H8BKI7C1Y0&keywords=A+wolfhound+Reminiscs&qid=1666144942&qu=eyJxc2MiOiIyLjE3IiwicXNhIjojMC4wMCIsInFzcCI6IjAuMDAiIjQ%3D%3D&s=books&sprefix=a+wolfhound+reminiscs%2Cstripbooks%2C88&sr=1-1&asin=1791609724&revisionId=&format=4&depth=1)



9/22 Photo Montage of Bob Garrett

## Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

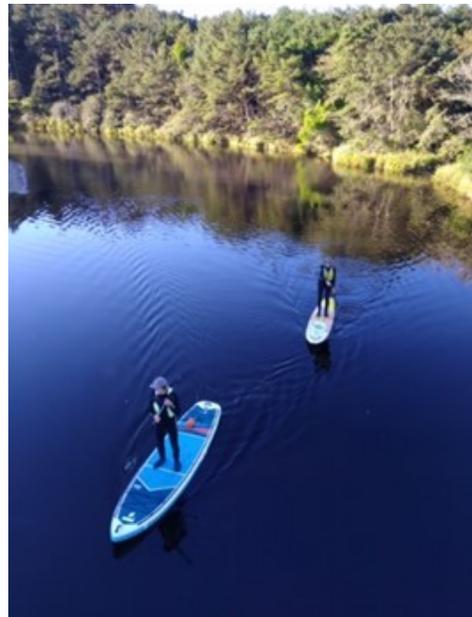
**Don Miles** reports, "I spent five nights at the Baylor Scott & White Hospital in Lakeway after having to evacuate my apartment due to mold. My daughter, **Juliette Ritzman**, flew down from Kansas City to help me negotiate a free temporary apartment. I was able to move back into my regular apartment on October 20th. **Juliette** and her husband have just adopted a beautiful black retired horse named **Mark** from the Arlington National Cemetery where it had worked for 22 years. **Juliette** has a degree in Equine Administration from William Woods University in Missouri and competes in mounted cavalry and historical reenactment events with her other horses. She's getting closer to completing her Ph.D. in International Commerce, but was delayed for nine months last year when her National Guard unit was deployed to Kuwait. She's been a grandmother for several years now, but is still flying helicopters with the guard and reports to Quantico, Virginia, for more training on December 18th. That will put her near Washington, DC, so we'll all be celebrating Christmas at her brother Richard's house in northwest DC."



10/22 Juliette Miles Ritzman with her new horse

**Pam Tucker** shares, "Savanna Tucker asked her mom to come to Seattle for Parents' Weekend and to stay with her in her rental house with 7 other girls. Of course I said yes. I decided to visit other friends on the way to Seattle. **Kathy**, a friend from

college and retired professor from OSU, and her partner, who live in Corvallis were the first on the travel itinerary. We actually drove to **Kathy's** beach house ('Kathyport') at the coast and spent time paddle boarding, flying kites on the beach, and playing Rummikub, Cribbage and Ping Pong. It was a blast! Next visit was with **Juli** in Portland. We hiked several miles in a beautiful huge park in Portland called Forest Park. You could not tell that we were in the city! That evening we went out for a tasty dinner. Sadly, I forgot to get any pictures with **Juli**. On Friday I took the Flixbus to Seattle which dropped me off at the UW campus where **Sav** picked me up. We participated in a few of the sorority Parents' Weekend activities including Mocktails and snacks on Friday night, and Saturday's "tailgate party" before the football game at one of the live-out houses, which was a nice lunch or just drinking for those who wanted to--and there were plenty who did. Although I like beer, I was glad that **Sav** did not press me into any drinking games against other parents and their daughters! We did not go to the football game for which I was grateful. We had a great dinner out that night. I helped Sav rearrange her room and go through stuff to send back home, which made her really happy (and me too). We had a nice brunch at the sorority house on Sunday morning and we went for a hike at Seward Park which is a peninsula on Lake Washington near Mercer Island. **Sav** has a large group of friends from rowing and the sorority. Monday morning, I headed back after a terrific week."



10/22 Pam Tucker following her friend Kathy on a paddle board

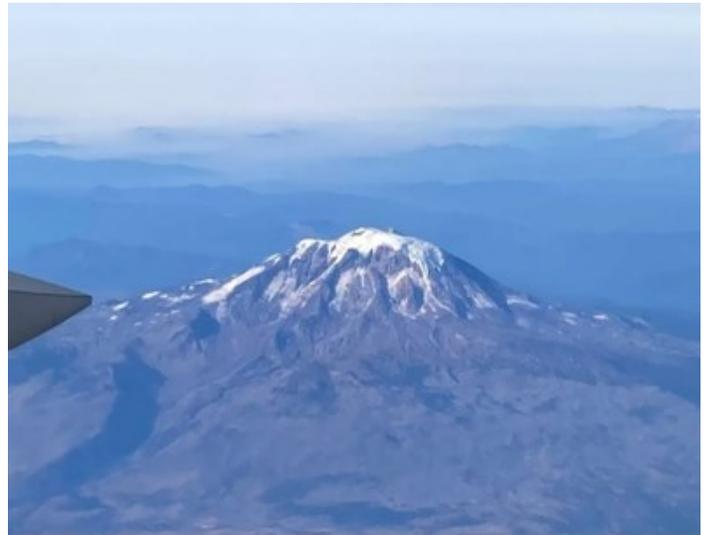
**Personals (cont)**  
by Pat Oakes



10/22 Savanna and Pam Tucker in Seattle



10/22 Savanna Tucker and her mom Pam in Seattle



10/22 Pam Tucker's view of Mt. Ranier on her commercial flight home from Seattle

**Warinda Harris** had a heady first three weeks in her new job working as an organizer for Central Texas Interfaith/West Southwest Industrial Areas Foundation (CTI/IAF). CTI held a well-attended candidate accountability session at Huston-Tillotson, had a CTI leader (Mother Minerva) interviewed on Jon Stewart's new show ("The Problem with Jon Stewart" on Apple TV+ - Season Two, episode three), and along with IAF had a 90 minute audience in Spanish on October 14th with Pope **Francis** on Zoom. It was indeed most gratifying to have the Pope bless the work that CTI is doing. **Warinda** modestly points out that she did not initiate all of the events, but that she was a participant!

[https://www.austininterfaith.org/r?u=GQ96LxW7tJscudkL8mlwNzVEKXk7dMDJzwJlfbiiRYWDTI61vjsUiPeBNOqfi53&e=9a3fd0a1a44dfa8590daace32422b5d1&utm\\_source=austininterfaith&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=1024\\_jonstewart&n=3](https://www.austininterfaith.org/r?u=GQ96LxW7tJscudkL8mlwNzVEKXk7dMDJzwJlfbiiRYWDTI61vjsUiPeBNOqfi53&e=9a3fd0a1a44dfa8590daace32422b5d1&utm_source=austininterfaith&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=1024_jonstewart&n=3)

There was a good group for the Sunday School Kickoff on October 9. The children are meeting upstairs in the Towery wing. **Kay Pruett** is using the Godly Play curriculum and the children are enjoying it very much. The nursery is adjacent, so baby **Sebastian Hernandez-Geer** is nearby. Part of the activities for the children is going downstairs to the sanctuary before the service and enjoying music time with **Jonathan Geer**.

Photos cont. on the next

**Personals (cont)**  
by Pat Oakes



10/9/22 Sunday school kickoff--music time-- nursery teacher Anne Abel holding baby Sebastian Hernandez-Geer, Charlie, her mom nursery teacher Justine Espinosa, her son Kai, Pastor Amelia, George and Vivienne Zercher, Xitlali Hernandez-Geer, Roberto Hernandez, and Kay Pruett--Pastor Amelia on the right enjoying the fun (not shown—Jonathan Geer on piano)



10/9/22 Sunday school kick-off in the upstairs classroom -- Anne Abel holding Sebastian H-G, Godly Play teacher Kay Pruett, Vivienne and George Zercher, Xitlali H-G, Kai, Charlie, and Justine Espinosa

The beautiful memorial service for **Kathy Weiner**, partner of 30 years of **Stephanie Phillips**, was held at upRising Church on South First St. in Austin. The church was founded years ago as the Metropolitan Community Church and they worshipped in our church for a number of years until they were able to build their own sanctuary. **Stephanie** and her sister **Katy's** parents are **Betty Phillips** and the late **Bill Phillips**. Several of us from the church were able to attend including **Lucy Erda**, **Liz Nash**, **Pastor Amelia**, and **Mel and Pat Oakes**. The

music was wonderful including several videos by well-known Austin singer and song writer **Sara Hickman**, **Jen Mulhern**, cellist, jazz vocalist and pianist **Rhiannon**, and **Sheryl Stack**, pianist. Leading part of the service was Dr. **Mary Wilson** who has worshipped with us a number of times. **Kathy** organized the first true recycling business in Austin when she was working for Whole Foods. It was the forerunner of our city-wide recycling program. She also was the director of Hands on Housing, a part of IACT (Interfaith Austin—Central Texas), where she identified homes primarily in East Austin which needed improvements and renovations to make the homes livable, then organized volunteers from churches in the Austin area to do the work. **Betty**, **Stephanie**, and **Katy** all mentioned how difficult the past several years have been as **Bill** and **Kathy** were diagnosed with the cancers within two days of each other that took them both.



10/13/22 Betty Phillips at Kathy Weiner's memorial service



10/13/22 Lucy Erda and Liz Nash at Kathy Weiner's memorial service

## Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

**Amy Harris** was quite surprised during the October 23rd church service when Deacon **Jen Howicz** (holding a bouquet of flowers) called **Amy** to come to the front. She was even more surprised when Jen presented her with a gift card from the congregation in grateful appreciation for her serving as interim music coordinator without pay since the beginning of the pandemic. **Nodie Murphy** had retired during the pandemic. Our new music director **Laura Martin** who visited with us on the 23rd will start on October 30. In another sign of some things returning to normal, there was even a coffee hour with snacks and time to visit after church.



10/23/22 Folks applauding Amy Harris for her work as interim music director

**Lynne** and **George Lemley** have had a lot to deal with the past several months. Sadly, **George** was rear ended twice on I-35—once on June 28th when his back was injured and his prized Lexus was totaled—and then again on October 7th—re-injuring his back, but this time their 2005 Subaru was still drivable. After PT and lots of doctor appointments, **George** is back to work, but is still having back issues. A joy in their lives is their 19-month-old granddaughter **Josette**. Son **Jeffrey** had to stay behind because of work, but **Rachelle** took their daughter to Halifax, Nova Scotia, to visit her folks and her grandmother. **Josette** can fly for free until she is two, so they were taking advantage of that break. **Rachelle** notes that **Josie** is a happy flyer and sleeps most of the time.

We had another wonderful surprise at church on Oct. 23—**Beth Gleason** delighted folks by coming to visit from Maine. **Liz** and **Reuel** kept the secret well. After church and a brief coffee hour, some folks including **Reuel, Liz, Beth, Jaime, Pam Tucker** and others migrated to the nearby Presbyterian church which was holding the annual youth group carved pumpkins sale (youth from University Baptist, University Presbyterian, University Christian, and our church—although our youth were not able to help this time). **Reuel Nash** worked with the young folks on Saturday as the pumpkins were carved. The funds raised from the carved pumpkins helps provide funds for the youth to buy Christmas gifts for needy children in Austin. .



10/23/22 Amy Harris being celebrated for her work as interim music director at the church



10/23/22 Beth Gleason visiting from Maine with Liz Nash at the youth group pumpkin sale

## Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

**John Goff** and **Gail Christeson** spent a week in New Mexico touring around the state by car. Stops included Santa Fe, Taos and Albuquerque. In Santa Fe, they were there for Indigenous Peoples Day and got to marvel at all the amazing crafts being sold on the city plaza by the Native Americans from the surrounding pueblos. They also visited one of the many art museums as well as the state history museum. In Taos they explored the wonderful scenery with several hikes, including a tough one to the top of a local peak with spectacular views (proof in the picture!). In Albuquerque, more hikes, a ride up the Tram, and visits with a couple of colleague friends. The local cuisine was fabulous, as well as the local craft brews



10/22 John Goff and Gail Christeson hiking near Taos enjoying the beautiful scenery.

**Whit Bodman** is staying very busy! He will be working at the Flawn Academic Center on the UT campus from 7 AM until 1 PM every day of early voting with shorter hours on Sundays. He will be working out towards Cedar Park at Central City Austin (which obviously is not central in Austin at all) on election day. Otherwise, he is making wood figures for the Godly Play Sunday school curriculum and shelves for their room, and packing books—lots of books. He has donated 30 boxes of books to Recycled Reads. He is also doing some research on religious nationalism for the National Council of Churches and will be going up to a Jewish-Christian dialogue for the National Council of Churches in Providence, RI, before Thanksgiving. They will be having some difficult conversations about Zionism, but the members of the group have spent enough

time together to have real affection for each other, which makes it easier (maybe). **Whit** represents the UCC. He is working with a group concerned about racism at his other church in Jersey City (where they will be moving next year). They will be reading “The Person You Mean To Be” by Dolly Chugh for Advent plus he is doing a regular Friday Bible study with them, currently reading Hebrews. **Betty** is staying busy, too—helping with their grandchildren in New Jersey. Whew!!!



10/25/22 Whit Bodman at the Flawn Academic Center working the polls really EARLY—it was still dark outside.

## History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes—Part 2

Recently while **Pastor Amelia** was on leave, Conference Minister Rev. **Phil Hodson** filled in for two Sundays. At one of the services, he asked members of the congregation to lift up things that we all loved about our church community. Many items came up—our music and musicians, our annual Christmas dinner for the homeless, potluck suppers, the church candlelight service right before Christmas, attending the Equal Justice Center annual golf tournament at Peter Pan Golf, etc., but by far, the most celebrated event was the talent show. The talent shows originated in the mind and heart of our fabulous former choir director, **Nodie Murphy**.

**Nodie** says she was motivated most of the time to create an atmosphere that highlighted other people's abilities. She loves the idea of discovering hidden things about folks—surprises. For example, we were all delighted to learn that **Bill Beardall** is a great yodeler—who knew!!! It was an opportunity to learn more about the folks at church. Also, many of the activities at the church were focused on outreach. Instead, this was a way to learn about each other and to have a good time, too. We often had them on Friday evenings with a simple soup supper and a perhaps a cookie course prior to the big show. Among others, **Jaime Hadley** made authentic New England clam chowder, **Reuel Nash** made his famous gumbo several times and **Nodie** made her delicious French potage.

Sometimes we were raising funds for a cause—a mission trip, or sponsoring a Palestinian child at a school, etc. There was absolutely no competition, although kazoos were sometimes handed out for each participant.

**Nodie** does not remember when the first one was, but the earliest one I have photos of is one in 2006. If any of you have photos to share of other talent shows, please send me a few to use next month.



3/4/11 Betty Phillips and Nodie singing ("Meow") at the church talent show



3/4/11 Bill Phillips performing the "Hawaiian War Chant" at the talent show



3/4/11 Fun at the church talent show with Nodie Murphy, pianist Terry Heller, Whit Bodman, Cathy Hubbs, Rambie Briggs, and Vic Appel



3/4/11 Fabulous clean-up crew--Bill Mueller, Dennis Murphy, and Jaime Hadley after the church talent show—now that is real talent!!!

## History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.



2/24/17 At the talent show, Mel Oakes assisted by Jim Howicz and Jaime Hadley, explaining coupled pendulums



2/24/17 Pat's talent (after two major back surgeries in 1 month) was showing how she puts on her socks and shoes nowadays



2/24/17 Nancy Edison talking about why she loves gardening--at the church talent show with Bill Beardall holding the garden picture



2/24/17 Roberto Hernandez and Jonathan Geer playing a duet on their guitars at the church talent show



2/24/17 Ruth Koenig telling a joke at the talent show



2/24/17 Zooeey and her dad Jason Parkhill participating in the church talent show

## History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.



2/24/17 Joy Penticuff reciting a poem at the church talent show



2/24/17 Chencho Flores played his accordion at the church talent show



2/24/17 Bill Beardall singing, channeling Elvis, and playing at the church talent show