

THE VISITOR

November 2023

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

***To unsubscribe to The Visitor Newsletter please contact us at office@congregationchurchofaustin.org**

Rev. Ginny Brown Daniel, Interim Pastor

This past December, my husband and I started binge watching all 11 seasons of MASH. I was a little girl when the show first aired, and MASH provided a consistent cultural presence for my family until 1983 (ask me about how I thought my dad was Alan Alda on MASH). There are some aspects of the show that haven't aged well – the racism to the Korean people, the immense sexism to the nurses and Margaret Hoolihan. But there are many aspects of the show that still hold up today – the honesty about war, relationships, and death.

A few weeks ago, we watched the last episode with Gab, our exchange student. It was fun to tell him that this final episode had been watched by 106 million people, which broke records for 20 years with the number of viewers of any tv show (way before streaming and YouTube). I will tell you that the last episode, "Goodbye, Farewell, and Amen," is one of the best episodes I have ever watched. It's no surprise that Alan Alda wrote, acted, and directed the episode.

And yet, as we watched the finale in 2023, it was hard not to feel the devastation of the Hamas attack on Israel and the impending retribution to the Palestinians in Gaza. The episode dealt with refugees fleeing a war-torn village, and I was reminded of the Hamas attack on the Kibbutz communities Israel. It dealt with Chinese musicians, who were slaughtered as victims of war, and the loss of their music in the world. And I couldn't help but think of the innocent Palestinians in Gaza, who have been slaughtered and the loss of God's image because of senseless retribution and violence.

I know that no tv show, as honest and aware as it might be to war, can ever do justice to the hell that is cause by war in the Middle East. And yet, as I am processing the recent violence, I have been struck by the silence in our communities regarding the horrendous violence in both Israel and the Gaza strip. I yearned for an interfaith conversation or just a vigil in Austin, Spring or Houston. And quite honestly, I have seen none. Perhaps it is because the violence leaves our Jewish and Muslim siblings so raw, that there is no room for the interfaith dialogues we have developed in our communities. Perhaps our Jewish and Muslim siblings are so worried about the impending violence toward their synagogues, mosques, and homes, as we have seen in other parts of our country that they don't have space for more than caring for their own families. Perhaps those of us who identify as Christian don't want to offend either religion and so we say nothing; and thus our silence permeates the ground of our being in our community and sends a resonating message we might not intend to our grieving neighbors.

Sadly, this war is not ending any time soon, and the violence (there and here) will only get worse. I do not have a comfortable way to end this post like the finale of a tv show. Instead, I will invite us to reach out to our Jewish and Muslim neighbors, speak out against antisemitic and xenophobic comments, and pray for God's healing peace to surround the most vulnerable in the Middle East, Ukraine, and all places where war has erupted. May the following prayer from the Churches for Middle East Peace guide us in the days ahead:

*God of Justice,
bless those who work for peace through justice.
Strengthen their resolve in the face of seemingly endless violence.
Guide the leaders of the people of the Middle East to know your will and to support a just peace for all of your children.*

*God of Love,
lifting up the holy land for all humankind,
breathe love and compassion into our prayers with a desire for nothing other than peace:
peace in our hearts,
peace for all creation, and
especially peace in the land that is called holy.*

Amen.

December's Visitor Deadline November 27, 2023

Church Leadership

Trustee's Chair	Kevin Dietz
Deacon's Chair	John Goff
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
by Pat Oakes

You will see a new look in the sanctuary — and it looks good. Many thanks to **John Goff** and **Jaime Hadley** who moved pews and chairs to make more room for the choir to practice and for folks trying to navigate at the front of the church on the pulpit side. The pews which were moved are now in the Fellowship room. The ideas came from the Deacons, Trustees, and the Coordinating Council and Rev. **Ginny**. Photo credit to Dave Ross



10/22/23 The choir practicing in the newly reconfigured choir practice area--Amy Harris, Barbara Burnham, Jonathan Geer at the piano, Sara Ross, Michael Ross, and Roberto Hernandez



10/22/23 Newly configured church pews and chairs--Jonathan Geer, Amy Harris, Liz Lee--and Reuel Nash at the back working at the on-line center



10/22/23 The front pew removed, the pulpit at floor level



10/22/23 Rev. Ginny with newly configured pulpit, pews, and chairs

John Goff and **Gail Christeson** went on two wonderful vacations recently. In August, and to commemorate **John's** 60th birthday, they traveled to Oaxaca, Mexico. There they toured the Monte Alban Zapotec pyramids (pictured), hiked around the Hierve el Agua rock formations, sampled fabulous regional cuisine (the best molé in the world), were guided around a sprawling city food market, visited a craft rug weaver, and sampled the local artisanal mezcals. Their second trip, in early October, was a trip to the Shenandoah Mountains, a short drive from their condo in Alexandria, Virginia. They stayed at an historic bed-and-breakfast, hiked up three mountain tops (pictured) in the mornings, and tasted local Virginia wines in the afternoons. One evening they splurged on a fabulous five-course meal at The Three Blacksmiths restaurant in Sperryville (worth looking up) - normally booked 6 months in advance, but **John** was

Personals (cont.) by Pat Oakes

able to score a table just a week prior due to a cancellation.



8/23 John Goff and Gail Christeson at the Monte Alban Zapotec pyramids in Oaxaca, Mexico



10/23 John Goff and Gail Christeson enjoying a great hike in the Shenandoah Mountains

CJ Wood is delighted with her new job. She says, "Welcome to Suncrest Hospice where there's no limit on animal therapy. I joined Suncrest Care and Hospice on Monday, October 2nd. It happened to be a week of celebration. We are now ranked #3 in Austin for hospice care. Our regional leadership had promised to put themselves up to be dunked in a dunking booth if certain company goals were met. That's just what happened at our quarterly meeting. I was able to meet around 80 people my first week including regional leaders. The animals were the best. There's Popcorn the rabbit, small and cuddly Mr. Jingles, and big and playful Gus. I'm enjoying getting to know my

team. I've started visiting patients and their families. It feels so good to be working. My body is holding up pretty well. I love being a chaplain. Another change is my living situation. I now am living in a 30-foot Avion camper trailer in Buda. Thanks to **Jen Howicz** and **Warinda Harris** for helping in the moving process. I'm grateful for my friend lending it to me. I'm still figuring out how to make it my own space. Overall, I'm settling in well."



10/3/23 CJ Wood at her new job at Suncrest Care and Hospice with Popcorn the rabbit



10/3/23 CJ at Suncrest Care and Hospice with playful Gus

Personals, (cont.)
by Pat Oakes



10/3/23 CJ with Mr. Jingles at Suncrest Care and Hospice

lot of fun together - it was a very special mother/daughter time. I think the worst thing about it was trying to coordinate calls back home and missing the kids! Also packing all the souvenirs we bought LOL. While we were gone, **Jason's** parents stayed with **Jason** and the kids for about half of the trip. They spent a lot of time doing house projects - it was very nice coming home to see the fruits of their labor!"



9/4/23 Debby and Kristen with a Shetland pony in Wadbister, Scotland



10/7/23 CJ is enjoying living in a 30-foot Avion camper (on loan from a friend) in Buda

Kristen Parkhill reports, "My mom (**Debby Kohrt**) and I went on a Viking ocean cruise around the British Isles. We first flew to Oslo and spent a couple nights there (beautiful city!), then took a train to Bergen, where we embarked on our ship. We headed up and around the Scottish islands and Highlands, we made one stop in Ireland (Dublin) and one in Wales (Holyhead), and then ended with a few stops in England (my favorite being Liverpool, where we got to go on a Beatles tour!). Viking provides tours or you can purchase extra tours that are not included with your cruise, which we did on several days. The tours were wonderful, educational, and exciting. Viking hires local guides, so they are really informed. We cruised for 15 days! It was a long trip, but we had a



9/8/23 Debby enjoying a delicious meal in Bergen

Personals (cont.) by Pat Oakes



9/10/23 Kristen enjoying a pint of Guinness in Dublin



9/12/23 Enjoying Beatlemania-- Debbly Kohrt and her daughter Kristen Parkhill posing in Liverpool on Penny Lane

Kay Pruett is certainly enjoying her first year of retirement from the Texas School for the Blind. In September she drove to and from Seattle, WA, for her 50th high school reunion and a visit with her mom. En route she visited four friends whom she had come to know online during the pandemic. She also stopped at several national parks—Mesa Verde, Yosemite (which was packed with tourists), and Grand Teton. While in the Seattle area, she visited the San Juan Islands including a bit of the National Park. She rode the ferry, camped on Lopez Island and visited one of her online friends while there. She also camped and met her sister in Anacortes where they had a good visit, having not seen each other in two years. She was in awe of the amazing scenery and

animal life that she saw along the way—ruins, rock formations, trees and forests, loons and herons, salmon jumping in the rivers, bison, and elk. In October she set off again—stopping at Mammoth Cave on her way to Louisville, KY, to see her friend **Craig** receive the award for National Teacher of the Year for the Visually Impaired—an honor indeed. Several other colleagues of **Kay's** also received awards— one was honored as paraprofessional of the year, and another was honored for a similar award after her 50 years of service at the school as an Orientation and Mobility Instructor. **Kay** was pleased to note that of the four who received awards, three of them were Black. On her way home from Louisville, **Kay** visited the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and drove many miles on the Natchez Trace. She drove about 10,000 miles over 30 days on the two trips and slept in her car most nights—mostly at campgrounds, rest stops, or truck stops. She has found the truck stops to be clean and safe—and likes the opportunity to take a shower—\$16.00 for a private, clean shower complete with towels! You are quite the adventurer, **Kay!**



9/23 Kay Pruett at Jackson Lake in Grand Teton National Park



9/23 These bison held up traffic for a good half an hour in Yellowstone National Park

Personals (cont.)
by Pat Oakes



9/23 This was crossing Utah. That was probably the place where I felt the most awe, because I wasn't expecting it. I found these rock formations to be just beautiful



10/23 On the way to Louisville, Kay stopped at Mammoth Caves National Park

Bill Mueller's 95th birthday celebration at Westminster on October 21st got complicated when someone in the skilled nursing area where **Bill** is staying got Covid and **Joan** who is living in assisted living at Westminster can't go there to visit in person as long as they are in quarantine. **Bill** is doing well in spite of some dementia. **Joan** says he is currently in hospice care and is very well taken care of. **Joan** and **Bill** are able to communicate by Zoom or FaceTime several times a day. Even with their two sons visiting from out of town, the four of them were not able to be

all together. **Joan** and **Bill** (who have been married 67 years) did enjoy seeing son **Matt Mueller** visiting from California for one day and son **Karambir Khalsa** visiting from Flagstaff, AZ.



10/21/23 Karambir Khalsa visiting in Austin with his dad Bill

Beth Gleason made a quick trip from Maine to visit the **Bodmans** in New Jersey and had a fabulous time at the Metropolitan Opera in Lincoln Center attending a dramatic and meaningful performance of "Dead Man Walking."



10/21/23 Beth Gleason, Betty and Whit Bodman at the intermission of the opera "Dead Man Walking" at the Met in Lincoln Center

Pam Tucker and **Mel Oakes** are pretty sure they have finally resolved the problems with the flooding of the basement stairwell. **Derick**, a plumber with Apex Plumbing (a company **Pam** uses at her business) used a snake and a sewer camera to open the drain line that **Pam** and **Mel** had determined was the source of the problem. While that problem is

Personals (cont.)
by Pat Oakes

resolved, it is still a mystery as to the non-rain source of water in the drain.

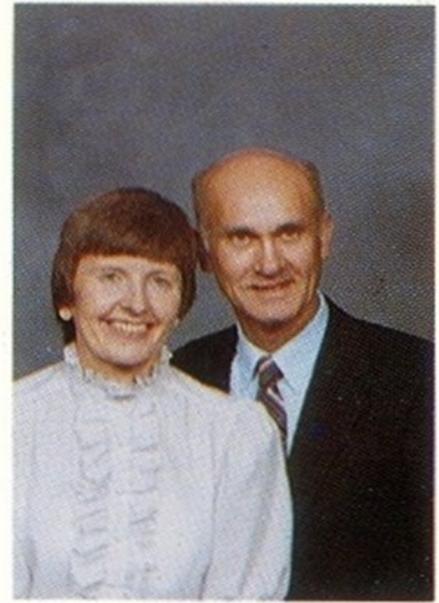


9/27/23 Derick with Apex Plumbing (recommended by Pam Tucker) worked for several hours with Mel Oakes as assistant unplugging a blocked drainpipe in the stairwell outside the basement restrooms

George Carruthers celebrated his 100th birthday on October 19th, but the real party was on Sunday, the 22nd, in San Marcos. There was a delicious barbecue lunch served to about 75 folks, including family and friends. **Marilyn Gaddis** was the hostess with the mostest—using a walker to protect her femur which she broke in a fall in May—she is about to graduate from the walker to a cane. **Marilyn** and **George** have been part of our church family since 1985—just a few years ago. Because they live in San Marcos they were not always at church in Austin, but they would come 4-5 times a year anyway. **Mel Oakes** was invited (and **Pat** came, too) because of the wonderful work **Mel** did on our Web site celebrating **George's** military service during WWII. Here is the link to **George's** remarkable story;

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

Erin Zweiner, the Texas legislative representative for San Marcos, was there to congratulate **George** and there were congratulatory letters from Senators Cornyn and Cruz plus the news that **George** has been awarded the highest level of recognition by the French government, the Legion of Honor, in recognition of his service to France during WWII.



Marilyn Gaddis & George Carruthers

Marilyn Gaddis and George Carruthers from the 1985 church directory



10/22/23 At George Carruthers 100th birthday party in San Marcos--l-r Granddaughter Allison Carruthers, Marilyn Gaddis, George Carruthers, Pat and Mel Oakes

Tommie Pinkard's 95th birthday is November 1st -- All Saints Day. She is delighted to have her two sons there visiting - David from Woodstock, NY, and **Chris** from California. She will be celebrating with a small party at College Walk, the retirement community where she lives in Brevard, North Carolina. I am sure she would love a birthday card—on time or belated. Her address is 55 College

Personals (cont.)
by Pat Oakes

Lane, Apt. 94, Brevard, NC 28712. She is happy there--very well taken care of--very pleased with a group of retired nurses who are wonderful about taking residents to doctor's appointments and visiting with them while they are being driven to and from.

Bill Beardall did it again! The annual Equal Justice Center golf tournament at Peter Pan Golf was a lively, well-attended event with outstanding representation from folks at the Congregational Church of Austin—and it did not RAIN.



10/25/23 Kay Pruett enjoying barbecue with friends she brought to the Equal Justice Center event



10/25/23 Mary Snodgrass came with her friend Sarah Darter and helped serve.



10/25/23 A wonderful surprise at the Equal Justice Center--Jaana and Ella Rehbein visiting Oliver Freiburger from Hanover, Germany



10/25/23 Bill Beardall just before dinner started at the Equal Justice Center's fundraiser at Peter Pan Golf after making sure that everything was set up properly--Bill with Andrea Haksoon Low and her husband Paul Toyozaki



10/25/23 Bill Beardall looking dapper, all set to visit with folks coming to Equal Justice Center's fundraiser

Personals (cont.)
by Pat Oakes



10/25/23 Joy Penticuff with Reuel and Liz Nash at the Equal Justice Center fundraiser at Peter Pan Golf



10/25/23 Joy Penticuff and Ann Locasio at the Equal Justice Center fundraiser at Peter Pan Golf
Photo credit—Pat and Mel Oakes

Pam Tucker and a friend from graduate school, **Marcia**, who lives in Baltimore, set off for Southeastern Europe on Sept 30th and arrived home on October 17th. They landed in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia and spent a couple days on their own going on a city tour and a war tour about the 20th century wars in the region. Zagreb is a wonderful city, but it is plagued with earthquakes. They could not tour several important buildings including the cathedral because it has been under renovation since the 2020 earthquake. They went to Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia and met their **Rick Steve's** 14-day Adriatic tour which toured Ljubljana, Lake Bled, and the Soča (pronounced Socha) River Valley. They learned about the wars in Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Montenegro in the 1990s. They

toured the Istrian Peninsula including swimming in the Adriatic Sea. **Pam** saw something she had never seen before, which are tufa barriers at Plitvice Lakes National Park which form natural dams of calcium carbonate. These dams have dramatic waterfalls and have created more than a dozen beautiful lakes as the water travels down the lake system. In most of the cities they toured, the structures built by the Romans were in amazing condition. In Split the Roman fortress is in great shape and a bustling current city is located within and outside the Roman walls. They saw sculptures by **Ivan Meštrović** such as the John the Baptist located in Jupiter's Temple in Split. Mostar (**Serbia Herzegovina**) was another highlight and where they learned about the destruction and rebuilding of the Mostar Bridge, and about the diving competitions off of the bridge into the icy water of the Neretva River. They relaxed and hiked on the island of Korčula which also has a walled old city. Their final stop, Dubrovnik, has a wonderful medieval fortified old town and folks can walk the entire wall around the old town. There is a Napoleonic fort at the top of the hill above Dubrovnik which has spectacular view of the coast and Dubrovnik. The people were all very friendly, the food was excellent, and all these areas depend heavily upon tourism. Their **Rick Steve's** group was a great bunch of folks and everyone got along well.



Pam and Marcia at Lake Bled

Personals (cont.)
by Pat Oakes



Group photo at the Mostar Bridge in Serbia/Herzegovina—Pam is 4th from the left in the back and Marcia is in front of her

It was a wonderful surprise to hear from our former church pianist **Aaron Carter-Cohn** in late October. He was the pianist at the church from 2003-2008 and was succeeded by **Jonathan Geer**. He writes, “My wife **Quintina** (whom I met while working on music in Nigeria) graduated from U. Georgia with a Master’s in Ethnomusicology in May and is currently pursuing her PhD, also at UGA. I am still affiliated with Morehouse College but do “research” full time. I say “research” because I define that broadly: it definitely includes writing and publishing in the traditional sense, but it also includes grant writing, workshops, concerts, arranging/composing, performing, documentary filmmaking, software and development, and archive curating. We are living in Athens, Georgia, but will likely move back to Nigeria once **Quintina** reaches candidacy. We are thinking of starting an NGO to advocate for children with disabilities in Nigeria and involving music therapy, etc. Our daughter **Chizaram** has Trisomy 21 and was born with a congenital heart defect while we were in Nigeria (which is why we came back to the States for a while). It was not detected before birth so it was a surprise, which is often the case in Nigeria, and increases infant mortality. **Chizaram** is back in the hospital right now because of RSV, but we hope she will be discharged soon. Our children are **Arinze** (boy, six), **Uchendu** (boy, four) and **Chizaram** (girl, one). I’m also directing the music at Covenant Presbyterian in Athens since August. They are perhaps the leading LGBTQ friendly church in Athens, so that definitely reminds me of UCC Austin. We also did “For the Beauty of the Earth” the first week the choir sang this

fall, which was a favorite of **Nodie’s**. We will sing “Jesus, what a Wonderful Child” during Advent and light the candles (also something I borrowed from UCC Austin).”



8/24/08 Out-going pianist Aaron Carter-Cohn, choir director Nodie Murphy, and incoming church pianist Jonathan Geer — Nodie hired them both!



6/23 Our former church pianist Aaron Carter-Enyi with his wife Quintina Carter-Enyi, new graduate from the University of Georgia, and their children -- Uchendu, 4, Chizaram, 1, and Arinze, 6

Personals (cont.)
by Pat Oakes

Anya Toskey (who has been a deacon with the church for the past year) and **Kevin Silva** were married with family and friends in attendance in Monterey, Mexico, on Friday, October 27th. The pictures tell the story of the wedding.



10/27/23 The wedding of Anya Toskey and Kevin Silva in Monterey, Mexico



10/27/23 The wedding of Anya Toskey and Kevin Silva in Monterey, Mexico



10/27/23 The wedding of Anya Toskey and Kevin Silva in Monterey, Mexico



10/27/23 The wedding of Anya Toskey and Kevin Silva in Monterey, Mexico

Beth Gleason writes, " I serve the Congregational Church in Durham, which is close to both Lewiston and Lisbon, where Mr. **Card's** family lives. Yesterday (the 29th) we did not have our regular Sunday service, but instead we had a Service of Hope and Remembrance for the 18 saints who were killed last week, some of whom were known by my congregants. I asked folks in the pews to come forward and light a candle on the 18 crosses on the altar, which had the names of the deceased written on them. Each time a name was read we rang the bell in the church tower. It was heard all over the village center. I humbly ask for your continued prayers for all of us in Durham and across our beloved state of Maine. Thank you. In peace, Beth"

Photo on next page

Personals (cont.)
by Pat Oakes



10/29/23 Beth Gleason led a service of Hope and Remembrance for her congregation in Durham, ME

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

About six weeks ago, **Mel** and I went down to the former choir room to look at some church archives. We found some wonderful treasures, including a large album of old slides ranging in time from the late 50's until the late 1980's. As **Mel** went through the slides, he realized that they were all from **John Towery**, pastor of the church from 1959—1989. Some of the slides were labeled, but others were not. **Mel** is working hard on getting everyone identified, but for the moment here is one photo to think about. It was taken about 60 years ago. Just imagine what our church members will see on this corner in 60 years! Next month **Mel** hopes to have a link to the album so that all of the old-timers can take a look.



About 1964 the corner of 23rd St and San Antonio — the parsonage at the time and the church building