

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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Rev. Ginny Brown Daniel, Interim Pastor

Last month, I had the honor of representing the Congregational Church of Austin at Huston-Tillotson University's (HT) Charter Day upon the invitation of HT's board president, the Rev. Dr. **Vanessa Monroe** (UCC pastor in the Houston Association).

Our ancestors, the Congregationalist's American Missionary Association, founded Tillotson College in 1875 and merged with Huston College (of the United Methodist Church in 1952). Celebrations abounded on Charter Day because HT was recently ranked first in the category of private HBCUs in Texas by U.S. News and World Report! Woohoo! They also recently approved an HT satellite campus in San Diego, CA, which will be the first HBCU in California! Rev. **Monroe** shared with us that the San Diego campus was given to HT so that they won't incur the cost of purchasing or leasing this property. Wow!

Warinda Harris and **Liz Nash** also represented CCA. When we gathered in the President's dining hall for the Charter Day lunch, **Liz** and **Warinda** saw the portrait of former HT president and CCA member, the Rev. Dr. **Jospeh McMillan**, and recounted his presence at CCA singing in the choir and wearing a purple suit that only he could wear!

At lunch, we were joined by Dr. **Robert Stanton**, who retired from the Department of Interior where he worked in the National Parks department since he graduated from HT in 1963 until his retirement. He recalled the National Park sites that honor the fight for racial justice and equity such as the homes of **Medgar Evers**, Dr. **Mary Cloud Bethune**, and **Frederick Douglass**. I asked him when the National Parks were integrated and he said that **Harold Ickes**, the Secretary of Interiors under the Roosevelt Administration desegregated the national parks in 1933.

President **Melva Wallace** shared that this year leading up to the sesquicentennial in 2025 will provide many opportunities to celebrate the legacy and future of Huston-Tillotson University. I will share events as they arise. May God's spirit continue to bring us together at CCA and Huston-Tillotson in God's justice work together.

Blessings, Ginny



December Visitor Deadline November 25, 2024

Church Leadership

Trustee's Chair	Bill Campbell
Deacon's Chair	Open
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

Cameron Goff (son of Gail and John) and his wife Amber Goff are the proud parents of identical triplets(!): Lelan, Bennett and William. The boys were born way back in July at just 27 weeks of gestation, and have been in Texas Children's (Houston) NICU ever since. All three are doing great, as are the parents. Bennett and William are expected to come home soon, with Lelan needing to stay for a bit longer to fully recover from earlier gastrointestinal surgery. Here's a photo of Cameron with Bennett and William getting set to watch the Longhorns get beat up by the Bulldogs, but at least everyone is wearing the right colors. Gail and John are, of course, incredibly proud and delighted to be grandparents to three adorable baby boys. WooHoo!!! Bennett on the left and William on the right.



10/19/24 Cameron Goff holding sons William and Bennett--all ready to watch the UT vs. GA game

Rev. Jo Jensen, now retired, (who brought the prayer net idea to us years ago) reports, "Several months ago, I jumped in with both feet, two pets, and a camper van named Stella packed with more than we needed. We traveled over 6,000 miles round trip, visited 15 states, extraordinary National Parks, including Maine's bucket list Acadia NP, walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, visited family and old friends, made countless new friends, dodged a couple hurricanes, enjoyed a variety of wildlife, woke to gorgeous sunrises, slept under blankets of dark sky stars, thrilled to indescribable fall foliage, snapped

endless photos, and created unimaginable memories. No single picture captures it all but the unexpected early morning hot air balloon over the Mississippi River Bridge caused me to run for my camera! All three substantial life bones were fortified by this journey: wish bone, funny bone, and back bone. It was a soulful journey indeed!"



10/24 Jo Jensen's view of a hot air balloon and the Vidalia, LA - Natchez MS Bridge over the Mississippi River

Pam Tucker volunteered, "I thought I would get to the October 12th church workday a few minutes early, but Ginny, John Goff, and Lance Abella (who just moved here from Vermont) were already hard at work. Kay Pruett came a few minutes later. The guys were definitely the brawn for the day! John and Lance had already cut down everything except the trunk and roots of the larger stuff. Ginny and I and Kay put the cuttings in the yard waste bags. Then came the real work. John with the pickax and Lance with the ax--they cut out ALL of the roots of the larger shrubs and trees so they will not be growing back. Some were quite large. We loaded up as many bags as we could to take home for yard waste pickup. John had to leave to get cleaned up and head out of town. It was amazing that he made time to come, considering he was leaving. Lance's strength and stamina were amazing. After the yard work was completed, Kay, Ginny and I went inside to install the "cable raceways" to hide the TV cables which have fallen down multiple times and are an eyesore for those who have not gotten immune to seeing them. Serge recommended what product to get to hold them up, Ginny bought it, and Ginny, Kay and I installed it. Let's hope, the cables remain hidden in the raceways from now on!"

Personals (cont.)
by Pat Oakes



10/12/24 John Goff with pruning shears cutting back shrubbery, Lance Arbella and Pam Tucker filling up yard waste bags



10/12/24 Pam Tucker and Lance Arbella filling up yard waste bags at the church work party



10/12/24 Pam Tucker on ladder and Kay Pruett by the altar working on securing cables

Rambie Briggs shares, "On our visit to Biloxi last week in mid-October, we (**Rambie, Fran,** and daughter **Serenity**) attended son **Jonathan's** choir concert. **Jonathan** sings bass in the Gulf Coast Chorale which has about 90 voices. It was a beautiful evening of music. We also had a lovely visit to Back Bay Mission (where **Jonathan** works) and also saw old friends, **Karlyn Stephens, Bruno Schroeder,** and **Linda. Serenity** was our driver. We wouldn't be able to make that long trip by ourselves. We spent four days in Ocean Springs and Biloxi and four days of travel."



10/12/24 Jonathan Briggs, right, (and the choral director next to him) were delighted to have Fran and Rambie Briggs and Jonathan's sister Serenity Owens come to the Gulf Coast Chorale performance in Biloxi

Kay Pruett enjoys camping and the weekend of the F1 races and the UT vs. Georgia game seemed like a good time to get out of town. She says, "I did go camping and took a short hike this weekend at Lake Whitney State Park. I enjoyed the cooler weather, a sky full of stars, and a beautiful almost full moon."



10/19/24 Kaye Pruett really enjoyed Lake Whitney State Park

Personals (cont.)
by Pat Oakes

Stephen Russell was at a meeting Madrid, Spain, when Hurricane Helene hit western NC in late September and did a lot of coordinating with family from afar. Parents **Betsy** and **Rollin Russell**, sister **Amy Russell** and her family, and **Margit Briggs** (granddaughter of the **Russell's** and **Fran** and **Rambie Briggs**) are all okay after surviving Hurricane Helene in Asheville, NC. Their homes are okay. After more than a week without water, the **Russell's** found a place 15 miles away where they could go to an assisted living apartment that had power and water. They were glad to be able to continue to employ their daily caregivers for **Betsy**. A few days ago, they had water restored at their home and moved back to their place. It's been complicated, but they are okay. **Stephen** laments, "I actually don't have any photos to share from Madrid with **Amy's** kids!! Can't believe that ... " **Amy** and her family all were supposed to be in Madrid at the same time as **Stephen**, but except for the two college age kids who lived out of town, they could not get out of Asheville.

On Sunday, October 20th, a good time was had by all at the potluck lunch which was held after we were introduced to and heard the preaching of the new Interim South Central Conference **Molly Carlson**.



10/20/24 Our wonderful custodian Victor Cardenas after the potluck lunch enchanting Xitlali and Sebastian with puppy Luna, while dad Jonathan Geer looks on

The Equal Justice Center celebrated 23 years of their popular fundraiser at Peter Pan Golf (a fixture at Lamar and Barton Springs Road since 1948—but its days are numbered) on October 24th, a warm, clear evening for enjoying delicious Franklin barbecue and superb vegetarian Ethiopian fare with traditional Ethiopian bread called injera — and miniature golf!! The event was well attended and enjoyed by all. Our church was featured as a Pillar of Justice and has been a supporter of the event for many years. **Bill Beardall** shared that one of the reasons he became involved with our church is that he met **Tom VandeStadt** at a labor gathering years ago and they found that they both shared many interests—including justice for people who were being cheated out of the money they had earned here in Austin. There were at least 12 of us from the church ranging in age from two years old to 88. Pastor **Ginny** had offered Bill Beardall \$100.00 if he made a hole in one—which sadly he did not do, but when **Jonathan Geer** made a hole in one, she paid up! Woo Hoo!!



10/20/24 Lynn Chavarria visiting with Pam Tucker and Interim South Central Conference Minister, Rev. Molly Carlson



10/20/24 Pastor Ginny Brown Daniel was delighted to introduce us to the new South Central Conference Interim Minister Molly Carlson who was the guest of honor at a potluck lunch after the service in which Molly preached



10/24/24 Mel Oakes and Bill Beardall talking about the history of the Equal Justice Center's history at Peter Pan Golf

Personals (cont.)
by Pat Oakes



10/24/24 The Congregational Church of Austin, UCC, Pillar of Justice hole at this year's Peter Pan Golf tournament

wait to continue the tradition and see what the future years hold in store."



2020—Addams Family



10/24/24 Roberto (hidden at left) Xitlali and Sebastian Hernandez-Geer, Andrea Haksoon Low and spouse Paul Toyozaki, Pat Oakes, Mel Oakes, Gail Christeson and John Goff, Jonathan Geer



2021— We were running out of time and ended up making more a fall/autumnal seasonal card

Jonathan Geer says, "**Roberto** and I decided back in 2020 after we adopted **Xitlali** that instead of sending your usual yearly family Christmas card to all our friends we'd send an annual Halloween card. We might've come out of the gate a little strong with our Addams Family card in 2020. One of Roberto's (new) coworkers at the time was asking about **Roberto's** wife in the photo :) In 2021 we were running out of time and ended up making more a fall/autumnal seasonal card where I found some patterns for these really cool papercraft fox heads. In 2022 after **Sebastian** was born, we created a Dia de los Muertos type of scene. In 2023, we made a photo, but only posted it and sent it around digitally (again, the time factor!) but I regret that didn't make a printed card because it was a pretty fun Little Mermaid scene with **Sebastian** starring as **Sebastian** the crab and **Xitlali** living out her mermaid fantasies as Ariel :) This year it was Super Mario Bros. We can't



2022 Dia de los Muertos

Photos cont. on the next page

Personals (cont.)
by Pat Oakes



2023 Xitlali as Ariel the little Mermaid and Sebastian the crab



2024 Super Mario Brothers

the procedure she and **Mel** were home—and the next week (with the doctor’s permission!) they were on the plane to San Francisco for a two week visit while housesitting for their friends and spending time with youngest daughter **Mardie** and her son **Durham** now 12 and taller than his grandmother. The highlight of the trip was visiting Yosemite National Park. **Pat** found herself pinching herself often, still amazed that she was alive and well in Yosemite!



10/12/24 Mardie, Mel, Pat, and Durham with view of Half Dome from Glacier Point, Yosemite National Park

Don Miles, author of **Cinco de Mayo, the novel**, is staying busy and active in his Liberty, Missouri, area. He had a booth at the National Hispanic Chamber convention in Kansas City with his mannequin General Zaragoza. He also led a nine-day tour of four historic Mexican cities including Veracruz. Don says modestly, “Not bad for an 88-year-old!! Verdad, Don!!!

Sarah Darter has been working as an alternate election judge for Williamson County and related an interesting experience at a polling place for early voting. Two folks told her that they had never voted before, one was a young woman who had just turned voting age, and another was a 65-year-old woman who had never voted. The older woman told **Sarah** that she had never voted before since her husband didn’t think women should vote. She then told **Sarah**, “My husband died this last year, so now I am voting!!!”

After about six months of not feeling very well, **Pat Oakes** had a rather surprising serious health episode in late September which involved a trip to the emergency room at St. David's, a miraculous procedure by a skilled cardiovascular surgeon at Austin Heart Hospital which involved angioplasty and stents to unblock two arteries — one from her heart to her stomach and another from her heart to her colon. The procedure was done through her wrist. The day after



10/24 Don Miles’ booth at the National Hispanic Chamber in Kansas City

Personals (cont.)
by Pat Oakes



10/24 Don Miles standing at the centuries-old main plaza in Veracruz, next to "Los Portales," (The Arches) which have been there since the 1500's.

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes



9/29/11 Supporters of the Congregational Church at the Equal Justice Center Golf Tournament at Peter Pan Golf--?, Fred and Carol Lee Scott, Mel and Pat Oakes, Betty and Whit Bodman



9/26/12 Tinkerbell, Barbara Sterling and Bob Brander, Sara and Dave Ross, Captain Hook at the Equal Justice Center tournament at Peter Pan Golf

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.



9/26/12 Tinkerbell, Dennis and Nodie Murphy, and Captain Hook at the Equal Justice Center mini-golf tournament at Peter Pan Golf



9/26/13 Equal Justice Center Mini-Golf tournament--Dennis Murphy, Ruth Koenig., Mel Oakes, Nodie Murphy, Robin Chapman, Betty Bodman, Pat Oakes, Tom VandeStadt



9/26/13 The Equal Justice Center golf tournament at Peter Pan Golf--Jason and Caleb Parkhill with Greg Futch

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.



9/26/13 Nodie, Rambie, Sara, Dave, and Dennis at the Equal Justice Center mini-golf tournament



10/16/14 Warinda Harris with sons Alden and William at the Equal Justice Peter Pan Golf tournament



9/28/17 It rained, so the golfing part of the Equal Justice Center's fundraiser was postponed, but marvelous barbecue was enjoyed by many folks including Pat Oakes, Kevin Dietz, Mel Oakes, Betty Bodman, and Lynne Lemley

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.



10/3/19 The Equal Justice Center Peter Pan Mini-Golf Tournament — Sarah Darter helped with serving the food



10/3/19 The Equal Justice Center Peter Pan Mini-Golf Tournament -- Faye Dierksen., Andrea Low, Dave Ross and Tom VandeStadt, Andy Dierksen.



10/3/19 The Equal Justice Center Peter Pan Mini-Golf Tournament -- Sara and Dave Ross, Pam and Harrison Tucker, Tom VandeStadt, Bill Beardall

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.



10/25/22 Gail Christeson and John Goff, Whit Bodman and Reuel Nash enjoying Franklin barbecue and vegetarian paella at the Equal Justice Center Peter Pan Golf Tournament



10/25/22 Pastor Amelia Fulbright with Vivienne, Jonathan, and George Zercher arriving at the Equal Justice Center Peter Pan Golf Tournament after a 2-year pandemic hiatus