

THE VISITOR

October 2022

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Amelia Fulbright, Transitional Pastor

Dear Members & Friends,

On October 2, I preached a sermon entitled, “What Is God Calling Us To Do?” Since this is the central question, we are trying to answer in the transitional period, I wanted to share here some of the key points about calling that I lifted up in that sermon:



- * **Calling is best discerned when we can root ourselves in a posture of trust/faith, curiosity, and wonder.** In the life of faith, certainty is not the antidote to anxiety, but *faith* is.
- * **Calling lies at the intersection between the needs of our neighbors (i.e. what is happening in the city around us), our own particular set of skills, gifts, and passions, and the work that brings us joy.**
- * To quote the late pastor/novelist/theologian Frederick Buechner: “*There are all different kinds of voices calling you to all different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than of Society, say, or the Super-ego, or Self-Interest. By and large a good rule for finding out is this. The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done...The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.*” - Originally published in [Wishful Thinking](#)

- * **Calling also is not some fixed object or idea that is frozen somewhere out there in time and space, waiting for us to come find it.** The search for our calling from God is not a treasure hunt or even a rescue mission. It is an ongoing journey of discernment. We actually discover what God is calling to do in the process of co-creating it together with God, noticing the nudges of Spirit, while also using our free will to make choices along the way.

Cont.on the next page

To put it another way, I don't think there is one thing out there that God is calling us to do. We're not looking for some kind of great reveal. Our task is to pay "exquisite attention," as the poet says, to each other, to the needs of our neighbors, to the patterns and threads that keep surfacing in our conversations. Last week I remarked that "the devil is in the details" when it comes to our property redevelopment options. The Good News is that *so is the Spirit*. Eventually we will begin to notice more and more energy and consensus gathering around certain themes and ideas, until one day we can say with some degree of confidence that we have discerned, collectively, a vision for our shared future. In that moment it may feel like a sudden epiphany, but when it happens, it will be the cumulative effect of how well we pay attention between now and then.

- * **One last thing about calling is that on any day, at any moment, we can live into the call on every Christian's life to "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God," right here where we are now.** We don't have to postpone this work until we have a perfect vision for the future. In this very moment:

We are a historic, inter-generational UCC congregation in the heart of West Campus at the University of Texas, Austin. Our mission is to be a progressive and inclusive spiritual sanctuary, ministering to the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual needs of the campus community and inviting people of all ages to make their spiritual home with us.

At the end of the sermon, I challenged you to take a stab at answering the question "what is God calling us to do?" by writing a mission statement of your own (similar to the one above, but with your own original perspective) that answers: Who are we, who are our neighbors, and what is our work?

Donna and I are working to set up a bulletin board in the entryway outside our offices (formerly the nursery) where members can bring their draft answers to these questions, typed up neatly or jotted down with pen (but ideally still legible! :-)). At this stage, we are not trying to whittle our purpose down to a single mission statement. We are trying to get a sense of where each individual member's hopes, dreams, and visions begin to overlap and intertwine with one another, leading us forward on a pathway into the future.

I really hope you'll participate in this exercise! The members of this congregation collectively bring a wealth of experience, expertise, and passion. We need each other because Spirit does her best work in the space between us, syncing us up and blessing the ties that bind us together. The more perspectives that are shared, the closer we'll come to discerning where God is leading.

May the peace of Christ be with you,

Pastor Amelia

November Visitor Deadline October 22, 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

Roberto Hernandez and Jonathan Geer are daddies again! Jonathan says, "Roberto and I decided to use a different agency to adopt the 2nd time around, and after things kind of fell apart with a birth mom who was actually in Austin, we got connected with a birth mom in Phoenix, AZ, this past April. Things went really well with her throughout the entire process, and we were communicating almost every day up until the due date (Sep. 11th). We were both pretty amazed at how well she was handling everything (with six kids already!) especially once we finally got to meet her in person. Our plan was to drive up to Phoenix a week before the due date, but we did end up leaving a few days earlier than that (around Aug. 30th, I believe) because it sounded like baby **Sebastian** was really ready to come at any moment. After I had booked our place on Vrbo my mom informed me that I was born THREE WEEKS after her due date!! Roberto said, 'I didn't think that was possible.' :) But we had made our plans already and were just hoping baby **Sebastian** wouldn't take THAT long to come into the world. Phoenix was of course going through a terrible heatwave when we arrived ('Welcome to the death heat' our Arizona lawyer said) and it did kind of put a damper on things. We normally like to do all sorts of outdoor activities and hiking, but it was just too hot for that with temperatures well into the 100s every single day and lows in the mid to upper 80s. Soooooo yeah... we binged a lot of Netflix!! We did meet **Kayla** and all her wonderful six kids though, and even had a chance to take them all to the Children's Museum there in Phoenix (one of the best in the country apparently?). The hospital did end up setting an induction date for Tuesday, Sep. 13th, but baby **Sebastian** knew he wanted to come on the 12th, a day after Sept. 11th (thank you!) and a day before induction. His timing was honestly pretty impeccable. Already a savvy little fellow! He was born 8 lbs, 20 in. long and sounding some powerful YAWPs when he came into the world. We did have to stay one extra night at the hospital since he was a little bit jaundiced, but we were able to leave after that and he has been a perfectly healthy little boy. The birth mom and her husband signed all their legal paperwork on Thursday of that same week and then we just had to wait around until we got "permission to leave the state." Since this was an interstate adoption it was a little more complicated, but it was held up by some things on the Texas side (which still kind of irks me, but I won't get

into it now!). We ended up driving as close as we could to the AZ / NM border and stayed in a hotel there in Willcox. We booked a single night, hoping we'd get the go-ahead to leave, but ended up having to book a second night. It was around 3pm AZ time that day when we got the news that we could leave (even though our Texas lawyer had known since early that morning!! grrrrrr). I did not even think about staying for that second night we had booked. As soon as we got that news, we packed up everything and hit the road and didn't stop until we were back home in Austin. It has never felt so good to be home again! We're all overjoyed to be together as a family now and couldn't not be more happy with our beautiful boy **Sebastian**.



9/25/22 A busy day in the nursery--Almost all eyes are on baby Sebastian Hernandez-Geer--Charlie?, Pam Tucker, Sebastian, Anne ?, Xitlali hanging on to Roberto's leg and Lynn Chavarria



9/26/22 A wonderful new addition to the Hernandez-Geer family--Jonathan, big sister Xitlali, Roberto, and brand-new baby Sebastian Kai Hernandez-Geer

Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

Joan Mueller is pleased to report that her husband **Bill** finally came back to their apartment at Westminster of September 21st (much later than the hoped for Labor Day). He was at the Heart Hospital for more than a week with pneumonia and then went to the skilled nursing unit at Westminster to recuperate and regain strength. Now he is back home in their apartment, still weak, but working hard on getting stronger. We wish you well, **Bill!**

The amazing **Eunice Paul** celebrated her 101st birthday on Wednesday, September 28th, with her daughter Lydia and other family and friends. She says that somehow 101 is a bit anti-climactic after last year's festivities for her 100th! She is doing well, living on her own, and Lydia lives nearby and checks in on her several times a week. **Eunice** still vividly remembers her ten years at the church while her late husband Rev. Dr. **Robert Paul** was on the faculty at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary (1977-1987). It is hard to believe that **Bob** has been gone for 30 years. We celebrate 101 with you, **Eunice!** It is worth mentioning that our small church has had several folks reach 100 including **John McNeely**, **Florence Castle**, and **Marie Scheel**.



9/28/21 Eunice Paul celebrated her 100th birthday at her home in Leatherhead, England--she received a signed card from the Queen last year.

Ann Locasio shares, "I went to Dallas on September 12th-15th. I visited my former seminary on the SMU campus and was pleasantly surprised at how much more diverse the faculty are now than when I was a student there. I had a conversation with my former seminary roommate who is now a former district superintendent, and I caught up on the news

with my good friend **Lovelle** whom I met almost 40 years ago in the Young Enlightened Singles (YES) class at a church in Dallas. We chuckled as we agreed that we were both indeed young then, but not quite as enlightened as we thought we were. I enjoyed a long lunch and conversation with good friends **Cynthia Astle** and her husband **John**. Both are active in an LGBTQ-affirming church in east Dallas. **Cynthia** was once the national editor of the United Methodist Reporter. She covered the Oklahoma City bombing of the Murrah Federal Building for the newspaper when it happened in 1995, and I always enjoy getting her journalist's perspective on the processes and politics of the United Methodist Church. The Mexican seafood restaurant where we lunched was amazing too. When traveling, I always ask the people I'm visiting to pick a restaurant they love. It works out well. I also stopped in at the very-first-ever La Madeleine French bakery and cafe which opened on Mockingbird Lane near SMU in the early 1980s. I worked there briefly for its CEO **Patrick Esquerre**, who hired me after I told him I spoke French!



9/13/22 Ann Locasio in Dallas visiting her long-time friend from seminary, Lovelle Nord



9/14/22 Ann Locasio visiting another friend, Cynthia Astle, in Dallas

Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

Beth Gleason recently had a great visit with **Whit Bodman**. She says, "Whit was here this Saturday (mid-September) and I drove down from Maine to meet him for dinner at Faneuil Hall (he had "chowda" and a lobster roll). Then we walked over to the North End to have cappuccino and Italian pastry at Caffé Vittoria, a Boston landmark (the first Italian café there). The city was really jumpin' and we had a good visit. Doesn't he look happy?" **Beth** also notes that anyone from CCA who comes north to Baws-tun (Boston) is welcome to have a **Beth Gleason** tour of the city!!!!



10/24/22 Whit Bodman enjoying Italian treats in the North End of Boston with Beth Gleason

Nancy Edison writes, "I am now going to a Methodist church right here in Round Rock. I'm getting to the point where I prefer not to drive down I-35 or Parmer Lane unless absolutely necessary. I'm fine, but the traffic and gas are no longer ideal. Looking out the car window at the hubcap of an 18-wheeler is not my idea of fun. Take care, stay safe, and send my best to all." We miss you, **Nancy**, but we understand the challenges I-35 present to everyone!

Liz Nash celebrates, "I was going through some boxes at home a few days ago and came across a booklet put together for the 75th anniversary cele-

bration of Back Bay Mission (in Biloxi, MS). Since I just finished a six-year time (two 3-year terms) on the Board of Directors there and am currently an "ambassador" for the 100th anniversary capital campaign - getting ready to do several presentations for that great fundraising effort - I eagerly started reading through my find. The booklet has a fabulous, detailed history of Back Bay Mission, written mainly by **Terry White**, who some longtime UCC people would remember. The program for the October 11, 1997, celebration features our own **Dennis Murphy**, then the Vice-President of the Board. He was one of a panel of responders to the keynote address, along with **Olivia White** (Past President of the Board) and **Karlyn Stephens** (whose title was Program Director - she and her husband, **David**, led the Mission with enormous energy and vision for years). It was a joy to see **Dennis's** name and to be reminded of the great footsteps I have followed in serving there. Also, the history section about workcamps, a big UCC outreach and means of service to Back Bay Mission, mentions the 1991 South Central Conference Annual Meeting full workcamp day there as a highlight. That event was my introduction to the Mission as I was asked (well, kind of drafted) to lead the youth work camp portion of the day. A special part of the preparation was a trip I took out there, when the **Stephens** hosted me and gave me a marvelous introduction to the Mission and the crazy politics of Biloxi. I think I may have picked up this booklet at the workcamp there several of us went on in 2005 right before Katrina, or else I picked it up on a later workcamp. Back Bay no longer has any copies of the booklet with its treasure of a history, and they want it. So, I'm sending it to them after I have had time to scan it. And I invite all of us to give to the Capital Campaign. There's plenty to share about it, and I hope to get opportunities to do that."

It was a joy to see **Faye Dierksen** with daughter **Astrid** (five months old) at church on Sunday, Sept. 20th. Sadly, it was not a pleasure trip. **Doug Ingalsbe**, a long-time dear friend of **Faye** and **Andy's** who was working here in Austin and who had visited the church many times with them, died in his sleep at home. **Faye** came down to help with arrangements and brought **Astrid** with her, she was so grateful to **Joy Penticuff** who babysat for **Astrid** while **Faye** was busy. It was a relief to learn that **Faye's** folks (**Cameon Jacobson** and **Jim Wefso**) who have a condo in Venice, FL, were not there when Hurricane Ian roared through the area. More details next month.

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes



9/20/22 Faye Dierksen with daughter Astrid and Pam Tucker



4/16/17 Doug Ingalsbe at church--a dear friend of
Faye and Andy Dierksen

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

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.



9/23/06 Nodie and Pat singing a duet accompanied by Aaron Carter-Cohn at the church talent show



9/23/06 Talent show quartet of Sara Ross (violin), Sarah Gourlie (clarinet), Rambie Briggs (accordion), Fran Briggs (stomp fiddle!!)

Photos cont. on the next

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.



9/23/06 Bill Beardall--talent show—he yodels!!



9/23/06 Nancy Edison telling a wonderful story at the church talent show



9/23/06 Cameron Goff demonstrating his prowess on the pogo stick at the church talent show



9/23/06 Beth Placek dancing for the church talent show

Photos cont. on the next page

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.



10/23/06 Mel Oakes doing a science demonstration for the church talent show



9/23/06 Dave Ross reading Jabberwocky auf Deutsch: der Jammerwoch.



9/23/06 Emily, Jen, and Tess Howicz doing a skit at the church talent show



2/5/10 Soup supper and talent show at church--Norma Hawes and Joe McMillan dressed for the pirate choir



2/5/10 Pirate Chester Rosson in the choir with Mathis Blackstock during the talent show



2/5/10 Dennis Murphy with kids at the church talent show-- Harrison Tucker, Troy Matingue (a friend of Harrison's), Savanna Tucker, Vivian and Rose Summerlin, Wesley Matingue, Stella Fracasso, Chester Rosson, Jeffrey Lemley, and Dennis

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.



2/5/10 Barbara Burnham shared a moving original monologue at the church talent show



2/5/10 Jaime Hadley telling a joke at the talent show ("A piece of string goes into a bar....")



2/5/10 Harrison Tucker singing a Ukrainian song at the church talent show

Photos cont. on the next page

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.



2/5/10 Vic Appel gave a stellar performance of "Casey at the Bat" at the church talent show



2/5/10 Betty Appel singing "He Keeps Me Singing" at the church talent show