

# THE VISITOR

October 2023

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

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**Rev. Ginny Brown Daniel, Interim Pastor**

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**A**s some of you know, my husband and I are hosting an exchange student from Italy this year. His name is **Gab**, and he is a junior at Spring High School. **Gab** is our 9<sup>th</sup> exchange student, and I enjoy viewing American life through his eyes. **Gab** LOVES **Beyonce**, Forever 21, and tacos. Recently, **Gab** came to Austin with me on a football weekend, where I got to see UT-Austin through his eyes: lots of support for the LGBTQIA+ community (he identifies as gay), great fashion, and diverse people who support a common team. He loved the campus so much, he bought us matching Longhorn wristbands to wear!

When I asked **Gab** if he wanted to come to worship with me, he was a bit perplexed at first. He grew up Catholic, and his family only attends mass at Christmas. But **Gab** loves an adventure so he agreed to join us. He said that we were welcoming of him and loved the music, while asking lots of questions about what we do and why we do it. As we drove back to Houston, he asked why different people come together every week for something like worship. I gave him all the churchy answers and then paused. Those are just reasons. What about the deeper meaning of his questions?

*What is it that motivates people with little in common to not only worship together  
but to trust each other with their very personal life experiences.*

*What is it that holds these different people together even and especially when they disagree so that they don't  
go running to people or communities that look and think like themselves?*

These are the questions I invite you to sit with this month as we begin our visioning process. More specifically, I invite you to pause and really reflect on why you and other CCA members and friends return week after week, hardship after hardship, disappointment after disappointment.

The visioning work we will be doing for the next nine months is not about providing the reasons of why we joined the church in order to replicate that and keep the church going in the exact same ways for the next 122 years. Instead, **our visioning work is about the mystical essence God has created at Congregational Church, Austin, UCC, that is desperately needed beyond the walls of our building.**

Won't you join me in this pause as we listen for God's vision for Austin in the expression of Congregational Church, Austin, UCC?

**November Visitor Deadline October 24, 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	Britt Hicks
Director of Music	Laura Martin

## Personals by Pat Oakes

**L**iz Nash shares this wonderful report about her St. **Cuthbert** pilgrimage. "**Scott Martin**, retired pastor of Faith UCC in New Braunfels, **Beth Gleason**, and I went to the borderland of Scotland and England at the end of August to travel St. Cuthbert's Way, a pilgrimage from Melrose to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne that commemorates the life and ministry of **Cuthbert**, the great saint of this area, Northumbria, who lived from about 634 to 687. **Cuthbert**, a monk, hermit, and finally, a bishop, was renowned for his steadfast ministry to all during the plagues and difficulties of life in those times. He was also known for his piety, for his wisdom, and for his healing. Perhaps his greatest legacy was that in times when almost anything was an excuse for a leader to make war, he helped this area transition peacefully from his Celtic form of Christianity to the Roman form, which was becoming more powerful and dominant. The trail starts in Melrose, where **Cuthbert** entered the monastery, and goes for 62 miles along the border, passing along the Tweed River, through farmland and pastures (lots of sheep and cows staring at us), through a moor or two, and through the Cheviot hills. It ends on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, where **Cuthbert** served much of his ministry, became the Prior and Bishop, and lived at different times nearby on an island as a hermit."

"**Beth** traveled first to London and met **Scott** and me in Edinburgh, where we spent the first night going to the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, quite a spectacular show of military bands and artistic groups. Well worth it, even with the jet lag. Then we went to Melrose, where **Scott** and **Liz** took off for the hiking part of the journey while **Beth** shepherded the luggage from place to place, checked us into the places to stay, scouted out good places to eat, toured the towns, made a bunch of friends, and had very Beth fun adventures. **Scott** had hiked the trail during his last clergy sabbatical, so he was the guide, as well as giving invaluable help with where to stay, how to travel, what to see, etc. The major part of the hiking took four days, averaging around 15 miles a day, with one day being more like 19 miles and having the hardest climb of the trail at the end (whew!). The scenery was lovely; there was plenty of climbing, but not more than we could do, and our bodies and feet were pretty worn out by the end of each day. The route was filled with history. For example, the straight parts of the way are called Dere Street, the road constructed by the Romans, who built straight roads for their troops. We hiked around and over the

hill adjacent to Yeavinger Bell, the spectacular hill where you can see at a distance the walls of the hill-fort tribal center of the prehistoric Votadini people, near the site of Ad Gefrin, the inland home of the king in **Cuthbert's** time where many of the early Christians were baptized. We paused for lunch at St. **Cuthbert's** Cave, a very unusual rock overhang where monks fleeing Lindisfarne after Viking attacks placed **Cuthbert's** body for a short time."

"The final day was shorter, with a three-mile hike across the sand to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne. It was a joyful and fun crossing with **Beth** joining us for the walk. I did it barefooted, following the tradition of pilgrims across the centuries (and my family would have been surprised if I had kept my shoes on). Whether coming by car on the causeway or by foot across the sand, the crossing must be done while the tide is out -- the island is inaccessible when the tide is in. We also visited Bamburgh Castle, a glorious place where the king lived during and after **Cuthbert's** time. It is one of the rare castles still intact in England from before the time of **Henry VIII's** destruction of castles and monasteries. We were also very blessed with the people we met and befriended on the way, mainly toward the end: **Phil**, an architect on a hike that was also kind of a spiritual quest; **Myriam**, a missionary in a lay Catholic order who travels frequently doing their work in Africa; and **Anne**, a woman about to be ordained as an Anglican priest."

"**Beth** traveled home a bit earlier than **Scott** and I to start the semester in the culinary program she is pursuing. He and I traveled (by train) to Durham to visit the magnificent Durham Cathedral, which dates to the start of its construction in 1093. It contains the shrine of St. **Cuthbert** -- his final burial place after his body was taken to various places over several years. Totally worth the day and half we spent there, seeing the cathedral and museum and going to worship and an organ concert. Our final day was in Edinburgh, spent walking around and going to a musical about a 90s boy band. (How's that for different!)"

"I have been on a few pilgrimage trips before. I wonder each time if the trip will actually be a pilgrimage for me or just sightseeing (or just hiking). This time, I became immersed in a sacred history of people who were completely unknown to me before, in a history that is really part of what eventually propelled the Pilgrims and Puritans to this country, shaping my faith even today. I discovered why this man was so revered -- for traits and actions

**Personals**  
by Pat Oakes

that I will continue to ponder and admire. I found, once again, that a challenging hike takes me away from distractions and makes space to be in the moment, to focus on the wondrous things and people around me. It was, in short, a marvelous experience.”



8/22/23 The start of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo near Edinburgh Castle



8/27/23 Liz Nash and Scott Martin headed out for their last day



8/25/23 New friend and fellow pilgrim Phil, Scott Martin, and Liz at the highest point on the trail--Wideopen Hill



8/23/23 Liz Nash and Scott Martin channeling their inner monks at Durham Cathedral where St. Cuthbert is buried



8/26/23 Liz Nash and Beth Gleason at Bambergh Castle in Northumberland



8/29/23 Liz and Beth with an incredible view of the holy island of Lindisfarne—note the castle rising up high between Liz and Beth

**Personals**  
by Pat Oakes



8/30/23 Barefooted Liz Nash, Scott Martin, and Beth Gleason and the 3-mile hike to the holy island of Lindisfarne. Note the pole in the background for folks to hold onto in case they miscalculate when the tide is coming in

Interim pastor **Ginny Brown Daniel** and her dad, **Tom Brown** (from Auburn, AL), enjoyed a wonderful Saturday attending the Texas A & M/Auburn football game. Although it was really hot, they cheered on their team (unfortunately, Auburn lost). He worshipped with us and even accomplished one of **Ginny's** projects -- installing a curtain rod in her office so that she could hang her stoles! **Ginny** said her dad really appreciated the church's hospitality and looks forward to returning in the near future!



9/23/23 Interim pastor Ginny Brown Daniel and her dad Tom Brown at the Texas A & M game vs. Auburn



9/24/23 Tom Brown installing a curtain rod to hold Ginny's stoles at church—becoming a part of the “Congregational Construction Company”



9/24/23 Tom Brown showing his "Mission Accomplished" smile

**Betty and Whit Bodman** sadly said goodbye to Austin and landed with all their “stuff” in Jersey City, NJ, at the end of July. "Unpacking is still happening - give us another month (or two?). Jersey City is a lively, diverse place to be and we think we will be happy here. Being upstairs from our daughter's family is a treat; it's fun to have a little girl or two show up in the living room whenever it suits them as well as a dog to walk whenever it suits **Whit** (it always suits the dog). From our roof deck we could see the light into the sky from the World Trade Center memorial during 9/11 remembrances and it was quite dramatic. We were thrilled to have a visit from **Warinda** when she and her father came up for the U.S. Open. By coincidence they were staying in a hotel just four blocks away from us! See how easy it is to come for a visit? We hope you're all cooling off a bit down there. We've been sleeping with our windows open which is lovely."

## Personals by Pat Oakes



8/29/23 Whit and Betty Bodman were delighted to see Warinda Harris (a huge tennis fan!) while she was in the area for the US Open—9 year old granddaughter Clara took the picture



9/23 The daytime view from Jersey City toward Manhattan



8/23 The Bodmans new living room



9/11/23 Memorial lights from Manhattan as seen by the Bodmans from their home in Jersey City



9/23 Whit Bodman at his desk at their place in Jersey City

**Warinda Harris** and her father **Warren Johnson** made their annual visit to NYC to attend the New York Open tennis tournament. They had a great time (they saw **Coco Gauff** play several times), and **Warinda** was even able to sneak in a visit with **Betty** and **Whit Bodman** at their new home in Jersey City, NJ! See photos above. **Warinda** also reports that son **Alden** had a great time touring "across the pond" -- England, Scotland, France, the Netherlands. He had a great visit with his grandparents in New England and is now back in town for classes at ACC. **Alden** is seriously thinking about studying computational chemistry abroad. While "in the neighborhood", he visited several schools in Scotland and the Netherlands.

## Personals by Pat Oakes

Through the years that **Joy Penticuff** has been a part of our church family, she has often asked for prayers for her brother **Robert Hinson**. On Sunday, Aug. 27, during joys and concerns, she shared with us the shocking news that **Robert** had died suddenly the Monday before in a tragic hit and run accident leaving **Joy** and her three sisters stunned and bereft. **Robert** was a very gifted man who understood all things mechanical — filled with so much potential. He was a US Navy veteran of the Vietnam war. After his discharge from the Navy, he was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia—his life and the lives of his family members changed forever, but his sisters always stuck by him. **Joy** and her husband **Michael** were on their way to the funeral in Manning, SC, when their flight was changed several times and finally cancelled. Their daughter **Rachel** who was flying on another airline arrived on time and represented the family. Fortunately, there was a livestream of the service so they were able to be there in spirit. **Joy** was particularly moved by her sister **Beth's** incredibly loving eulogy. You can see the eulogy here: [https://boxcast.tv/view/robert-carl-hinson-dt7tuchkvf6v8dkgmxe7?gl=1\\*op2gq3\\*ga\\*MTk2NjE1Mjc0OC4xNjgwMjY2MzYz\\*ga\\_PXBBF7HVWQ\\*MTY5NDExMTY3My42Ni4xLjE2OTQxMTE4NDUuMC4wLjA](https://boxcast.tv/view/robert-carl-hinson-dt7tuchkvf6v8dkgmxe7?gl=1*op2gq3*ga*MTk2NjE1Mjc0OC4xNjgwMjY2MzYz*ga_PXBBF7HVWQ*MTY5NDExMTY3My42Ni4xLjE2OTQxMTE4NDUuMC4wLjA).



Summer 2022 Joy and her brother Robert in Columbia S.C., during a visit to her family. This was her last time to be with him.

**Sarah Darter** says, "I am excited by the response to my vision for ministry around Parent Effectiveness Training (PET). If you haven't seen my 20-page essay, let me know to email you a copy. I originally thought I would use it as a steppingstone into people's lives around Jarrell (where I moved to in February with my son **Rikki** and his wife **Debbi**.) I saw it as a door opener to families and people involved in the lives of children--especially parents

of all kinds, educators (in church and public schools) and counselors. I originally asked our Conference Minister, Rev. **Phil Hodson**, to read my vision, give feedback and point me toward any funding possibilities for my training. He really liked what I wrote and thinks this outreach has great potential for all the churches in our Texas conference (SCC-UCC). And possibly, if successful here, build and find funds that could help our UCC churches across the nation. He sees how it provides outreach and service to families and helps build meaningful relationships between the church and people dealing with raising and educating children. The 8-week training, once a week for three hours, provides collaborative, non-violent, problem-solving parenting skills. One of my future goals is to raise up parents and workers who would like to get additional PET training and continue the parenting programs in their own communities and churches. We are waiting to hear if the national UCC office will grant us half of the \$5,000 I am raising for my certification in PET. Our Conference Minister, **Phil Hodson**, donated \$1,000 of his personal funds. I have pledges/payments from church members that currently range from \$20 to \$500 dollars. I think, with Phil's \$1,000 we have almost reached our goal - possibly needing another two or three hundred dollars. I say Thank You for your help. Feel free to help bring this up to our \$2500 goal."

**Andrea Haksoon Low** shares, "I wanted to include a few things in the Visitor, some sublime, some ridiculous. First, here is a link to the ABA **Jeanne P. Gray** Diversity Scholarship Award that I received. I mentioned during our joys and concerns several weeks ago that it should be cause for excitement and enthusiasm but has become a time to fend off daggers aimed at my back.

[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/professional\\_responsibility/cprdiversityplan/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/professional_responsibility/cprdiversityplan/) (Scroll down to **Jeanne P. Gray**.) . It boggles my mind to hear so much bile and bloviation about the word "diversity," and I don't think this will abate in the coming year before I pass the torch to the next lawyer who will be the target of bile and bloviation. I take it as a moral challenge. Second, I don't remember whether I informed you that District 9 Council Member **Zo Qadri** appointed me to the City of Austin Ethics Review Commission. We have had many controversies and negative media coverage so far. Again, a moral challenge. Here are links (no photo or bio, fortunately) to the ERC page and roster. You will see that I have a special boards and

## Personals by Pat Oakes

commissions email address for any communications from the public and I welcome any comments anyone at CCA would like to express!

<https://www.austintexas.gov/content/ethics-review-commission> <https://austintexas.granicus.com/boards/w/d8f8018bef8ee001> And finally, as to the ridiculousness, I have to exclaim, I loved the Barbie movie!”



8/23 Andrea Haksoon Lo strikes a pose when she went to a theater to see "Barbie"

When **Pat Oakes** heard her sister **Nancy** say that she and her husband **Doug** were headed to Woodstock, NY, to a Peace Corps reunion of those who had served in Nepal 57 years ago, she immediately urged **Nancy** and **Doug** to see if they could visit **David Pinkard's** Woodstock Wine and Liquor and introduce themselves and get an update from him. They did and he was most surprised and delighted to see them. To learn more about how **David**, his wife **Suzanne Connole** and their daughter **Daphne** ( in junior high already) are doing, read the link. **David** is the son of longtime members of the church, the late **Doyal Pinkard** and **Tommie Pinkard** who lives in Brevard, NC.

<https://insideandoutupstateny.com/food-drink/we-are-upstate-ny-with-woodstock-wine-liquor-owner-david-pinkard/>



9/20/23 David Pinkard (who grew up in CCA) with Pat Oakes' sister Nancy Hatch who was visiting in Woodstock for a Peace Corps reunion



9/20/23 David Pinkard in front of his Woodstock Wine and Liquor store in Woodstock, NY

## Personals (cont) by Pat Oakes

**Pam Tucker** and **Mel Oakes** report, "The bubbling up of water in the church stairwell continues to defy the efforts of Sump Pump **Pam** and Electric Guy **Mel**. They purchased a sewer camera for a ridiculously low price and confirmed the blockage which prevents drainage. Here we see **Pam** with said camera. Water meters seem to have some issues and are currently not a useful diagnostic. **Pam** is contacting her plumber to see if he can open the pipe. Stay tuned



9/23/23 Pam Tucker and the continuing sump pump saga at church

**Mel** and **Pat Oakes** enjoyed a quick trip by car (1,333 miles, two days to and two days home with two days in town) to Vicksburg, MS, for their great-niece's wedding. It had been almost four years since they had been to **Mel's** hometown because of COVID. They were able to see a number of family members, but were very disappointed that **Mel's** brother **Floyd** and his wife **Betty** were unable to come since **Floyd** had recently had his hip replaced and could not manage the car trip from Gonzales, LA. **Mel** did all of the driving—and they had a good time reciting the litany of towns going north on highway 79 — all about 35—45 miles apart from each other — the distance it used to take a horse and wagon to get from one town to another in a day.



9/17/23 View of the very low Mississippi River as Pat and Mel headed west toward home--only very limited room barge traffic



9/17/23 View of the very low Mississippi River as we headed west across Louisiana on I20 toward home—salt water from the Gulf of Mexico is beginning to encroach into the river and is threatening the water supply of New Orleans

## History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

Mel and Pat Oakes finally made their way down to look at the archives at the church and found lots of treasures. This one seems particularly apropos. The link below will tell you more about Rev. A.O. Stevens—and the article below the link says more about A.O. Stevens and our church, written just over a hundred years ago.

Link: <https://www.patandmeloakes.com/PatandMelOakesFamilySite/CCAHistory/AOStevens.html>

Misunderstood  
Asserts in Lecture

2/26/23

### LAST SERVICE HELD SUNDAY

#### Church Structure Is Sold.



REV. A. O. STEVENS

the first pastor of this church. For here in this pulpit your first pastor fought and won the battle for spiritual freedom in Austin.

"Other sainted men have ministered in the churches of this community, and their ministry has been blessed. But it remains for Ritchie J. Briggs to strike the real and effective blow for spiritual freedom. And what he won at so great a cost shall never be lost. You and I and our children shall have the richer spiritual heritage for what he did here."

"Dr. Briggs did his own thinking. Great minds do not track, but blaze their own way. To be sure, spiritual freedom is dangerous and sometimes interferes with conventionalities and efficiency. But life is a noble adventure and freedom is worth the price."

"Dr. Briggs was known as the friend of the unfriended. It was charged against Jesus that his associates were very common. In Lincoln's quaint words: 'God must have loved the common people, for he made so many of them.' Dr. Briggs loved the common people. Those who thought little of the church—to their own misfortune—turned to him in the hour of their soul's need. A minister in his pastoral ministrations runs upon many tracks of those who have labored before him. I have run upon such tracks and they very frequently ran into the by-ways where dwelt neglected souls. I am not sure that I have the grace and patience to minister to such. If so, the more shame to me, and the more honor to him who did."

"These simple words of appreciation would be very deficient if they did not make mention of that sweet-spirited, kind-hearted, patient man who strove so loyally by the side of your pastor during the arduous years of building up this church; who has so tenderly cared for him in his sickness, and who will go with us to our new location and larger work with loyal heart and willing hands. This church will never have a more devoted member than our beloved Mrs. Briggs."

"We have reached a mile-stone in the history of our church. The old order changeth, yielding place to new, and God fulfills himself in many ways. By next autumn we expect to be worshipping in the first unit of our new building, where we shall have the facilities which were impossible here for ministering to our growing and important university constituency. There we propose to maintain a vital message which shall have a real message to the youth in their university days. It is not always the student's fault that they spend their Sundays loafing, smoking and idling. I think I never missed a Sabbath from church in my college days. But I cannot remember one single vital word which came to me."

"A pulpit can be so conventional and faultily faultless that its message fails to reach our inner ear. It is the business—and expectation—of this church in its new location to have a message for the young man and woman which shall be vital indeed. This with the spirit of friendship from those who miss the home ties will constitute our great and splendid opportunity."

Rev. Almon O. Stevens, pastor of the First Congregational church, preached Sunday morning the last sermon in the present church. The building has been sold and the congregation, beginning next Sunday, will worship at the morning hour in the auditorium of the University YMCA.

Rev. Stevens in his talk Sunday morning said in part:

"This church has been the scene of much sacrificial service. To mention all of the choice spirits which have worshipped and ministered here would be manifestly impossible, but a few are worthy of special mention.

"Judge D. W. Doom, whose name is on the cornerstone, made invaluable contribution to the establishment and maintenance of the church. A man of ability, a citizen of highest standing, a Christian of devout spirit, he gave of his talents and time without reserve. Though dead he still speaketh, and his fine spirit shall for all time characterize this church.

"As Sunday school superintendent, Judge Doom laid the foundations for this school, which has since Judge Doom's departure been carried on with much faithfulness and patience by the present superintendent, A. O. Watson.

"Mr. and Mrs. John H. Pope brought to this church spirit of rare devotion, a generous purse and vital spirituality. Mrs. Pope was a woman of unusual graciousness and warmth of heart. She was a source of comfort and helpfulness to many.

"John K. Donnan served this church with great faithfulness and ability. Though for a long time sickness of serious nature has prevented his participation in its activities, his heart is still with us, and our love and prayers are with him. May the evening of his life be as peaceful as the sunset hour and evening star.

"But linked most intimately of all with the history of this church is the ministry of its first pastor, Dr. Ritchie J. Briggs. Dr. Briggs stood up in this pulpit as champion of spiritual freedom. 'Freedom' is a sacred word, and in its name the choicest souls have suffered and died. All forms of slavery are degrading. The old Greek philosophers said that a slave is only half a man. But of all forms of slavery the fettering of the mind and spirit is the most baneful and deplorable. And spiritual freedom has required its champions as much as has political freedom. What Hampden and Pym, Warren and Washington strove for in the political arena, Isaiah and Paul and Luther and Robinson and Jesus strove for in the spiritual world. To this immortal group belongs