

# THE VISITOR

September 2025

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

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**Ginny Brown Daniel, Interim Pastor**

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Recently we lost a perhaps unappreciated longtime member of our church community — our huge sycamore tree which in the picture below is the tree on the far right. We don't know when it was planted but the size of the tree is consistent with its being planted at about the time the church building was dedicated 1922-23. Be sure and look at the slide show in the History Corner. We are really going to miss our old friend as there is no shade to accompany us we enter the church.



About 1960 The parsonage and the Congregational church at the corner of 23rd St. and San Antonio.

## October Visitor Deadline Sept 26, 2025

### Church Leadership

|                             |                       |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Trustee's Chair             | Bill Campbell         |
| Deacon's Chair              | Roberto H. & Sarah D. |
| 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           | Open                  |

## Personals by Pat Oakes

**Liz and Reuel Nash** report, "Our church friends **Catherine Hannon** and **Charlie Bernacchio**, who were with us at church much of the last year while staying close to their daughter's family in Austin to help care for their grandson, came to visit us in the Berkshires. They came over from their home in Falmouth, Maine, to visit **Catherine's** family in Litchfield, Connecticut, and drove up to our house for a nice lunch and visit." **Charlie** continues, "I understand that you have received a photo of **Liz and Reuel w/ Catherine** and me during our visit earlier on 8/5. We had a special time traveling up to their summer home in Mt. Washington to enjoy lunch and the amazing views they have from their home! We passed by their UCC church that is in the center of town, which is beautiful but quite tiny so that if you blink you might miss it. What a contrast from the bustling, urban life in Austin! We loved being there and spending an afternoon with our CCA friends!"



8/5/25 Charlie Bernacchio and Catherine Hannon visiting with Liz and Reuel in the Berkshires

**John Goff** and **Gail Christeson** have been on vacation in Taos, NM, and are delighted to share an article on their identical triplet grandsons. Click on the link and you will see the babies and the information about how they came to be how well they are doing today! <https://people.com/1-lb-triplets-survive-fetal-surgery-texas-surgeon-exclusive-11747314>  
**Lelan, Bennett, and William.**

**Dan Jeffery** (who was a member here in the early 2000s ) and **Carol Jeffery-Hoague** were in church on Sunday, August 10th and it was a wonderful surprise to see them! **Dan** assisted Pastor **Tom VandeStadt** in 2007 at the memorable service of baptism at Slumber Falls of **Jaime Hadley**. They had just arrived late Saturday after an arduous three-day journey by Greyhound, from Hermiston, OR, to

Austin, by way of Portland, Los Angeles, Phoenix and Dallas. They spent the day Sunday visiting church friends and other friends, and then on Monday headed back to Dallas to celebrate **Dan's** mother's birthday. This was **Carol's** first-time visiting Austin since they were married, and she really enjoyed the vegan food served at Casa de Luz. The pair made their return journey through Minnesota and finally made it back to Hermiston on August 15.



4/28/07 Dan Jeffery, Tom VandeStadt, Jaime Hadley at Jaime's amazing baptism at Slumber Falls



8/10/25 Jaime Hadley with Dan Jeffery and his wife Carol Johnson who were visiting with us from Oregon

**Barbara Burnham** has news to share. "I am retiring from the IRS, where I worked for a little more than three years. I was hired during a time when they wanted to hire a lot of people and had the funds to do so. They were still terribly behind because of delays during Covid. My first job there was in the Data Conversion Operation, which was entering paper returns into the computer system. When I started in

## Personals (cont.) by Pat Oakes

May 2022, there were 10 million unprocessed returns. Shortly before Christmas, we were totally caught up. It felt like a great achievement. In February I applied for a transfer to the 1040 - X department, which processes amended returns. The promotion was to the position of Tax Examiner. It was a difficult learning experience, but the advantage was that all the work is on the computer - no paper. Just about when I was getting the hang of it, our section was "detailed" to the Unpostables section. In that area, we dealt with returns that had been rejected by the system because of some sort of error--such as a wrong ID number, misspellings, money that had been entered into the wrong account. It was detective work and also satisfying, but again a totally different program that was hard to learn. After four months, we were returned to 1040 - X, but by that time, I had completely forgotten the computer programs we used! It took several months to become "fully successful." Now, of course AI is being put to work on 1040-X returns. Supposedly it is fairly accurate in processing simple returns, and we Tax Examiners get the more complicated ones. Now that I've really got the hang of it, I'm leaving! The work was totally outside the realm of my experience but interesting and challenging. The best part for me has been working with a team throughout all these adventures. They are all much younger than I, and everyone helped me in one way or another, from

connecting computers to the electric service on the floor, to small tasks like delivering reports to the manager. Pretty much I have been called "**Ms. Barbara**," not only by my colleagues but also by the guards. As a former psychologist, I particularly wanted to do something to help others. Whenever I processed a refund, I would think of the person receiving it, and what it might mean to them. Almost always, people who still owed money were aware of it and sent payments with their amended returns. In my own next chapter, I look forward to doing volunteer work, with Project Linus and possibly with an animal shelter. Much more reading. More time with grandkids. Most of all, I am relieved not to have to get up at 4:30 every morning!" Enjoy your well-deserved retirement, **Barbara!!!**

**Pam Tucker** has enjoyed spending time in Cuchara, CO, for many years—her family used to summer there and **Pam** has continued to enjoy getting away from the summer heat of Austin. When asked if she was bothered by the altitude after her recent visit to Nepal, she responded, "WHAT ALTITUDE?! This is a piece of cake for me for now. Not sure how long I'll be able to keep coming. My dad had to stop coming at about 70 (emphysema), and my oldest sister at about 75." The altitude in Cuchara, by the way, is a mere 8,650 feet, compared to Kala Patthar at 18,500.

## History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

This month's history corner celebrates the sycamore tree recently lost as a result of wind damage. **Pat** went through her files and assembled a photo album of the tree's history and **Mel** created a web page on the church history site that includes the album and Rev. **Ginny's** service celebrating the tree. This can be found at: <https://www.patandmeloakes.com/PatandMelOakesFamilySite/CCAHistory/SycamoreTreeHistory.html>

