

THE VISITOR

May 2024

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

Last month, my dad drove to Texas to spend the weekend with my husband and me. Thank you so much for welcoming him again to worship at the Congregational Church of Austin. We had a wonderful time touring my husband's new warehouses he built, walking our dogs, going to see the movie, [The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare](#) (based on a true story), and worshipping at CCA. We even ate at Torchy's Tacos in Austin on Saturday afternoon.

After worship on Sunday, my dad reflected on the current peaceful protests at UT-Austin being met by state troopers enacted by the current governor. My dad, who grew up with Alabama governor, **George Wallace**, standing in his school doors with state troopers, said the UT protests feel a lot like the movement for integration and the brute force used by both governors. I thought about it and responded, "Well, we see how integration eventually came for our nation so I will look to that with hope that God's justice WILL prevail for the state of Texas today." May God's peace be with us in these difficult days through time with family and friends, travelling, and worship at the Congregational Church of Austin, UCC! Woohoo!



Mid-Summer Visitor Deadline July 26, 2024

Church Leadership

Trustee's Chair	John Goff
Deacon's Chair	Joy Penticuff
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	Open
Director of Music	Laura Martin

Personals
by Pat Oakes

Our church family lost 2 special people in April—just days apart. **Tommie Pinkard** died on April 15th near Asheville, NC, after a long struggle with COPD. **Tommie** was born on All Saints Day in 1928. Amazingly, she made it to age 95. She and her husband **Doyal** (who predeceased her by a number of years) were long-time devoted members of the CCA until they moved to College Walk, a retirement community in Brevard, NC, in 2016 to be closer to members of **Doyal's** family. **Doyal** died not long after their move. She stayed at College Walk and enjoyed her time there. In Austin **Tommie** worked for *Texas Highways* magazine as an assistant editor from 1964-1967, and as an associate and managing editor from 1977 to 1986. She became editor of *Texas Highways* in July 1990. She grew up in the Miami, FL, area and was an alumna of the University of Miami and Florida State University where she majored in English. She and **Doyal** were both very active at CCA holding many elected positions. Their sons **Chris Pinkard** and **David Pinkard** and their families survive.



11/2/18 Tommie Pinkard's 90th birthday celebration Front row, L to R: David Pinkard, his daughter Daphne, Tommie, William (Chris's son), Chris Pinkard; Back row, L to R: Suzanne (David's wife), Kiana (Chris's daughter), Rizza (Chris's wife)



12/26/05 Chris, Tommie, Doyal, and David Pinkard at church for Christmas



2008 Tommie and Doyal Pinkard registering voters

Richard Austin Thompson, known by family and friends as **Rich**, died in Fort Collins on April 11, 2024, at the age of 90. He had fallen and broken his hip and never recovered. Survivors include his wife **Jane Neth Thompson**, sons **Mark Richard** and **David Ross Thompson**, David's spouse **Luis Tamayo**, granddaughters **Clara** and **Milena Suenskes Thompson**, grandson **Lucas**, step-children **Hal Neth (Natasha)**, **Caite Switzer**, **Cara (Torger Hougen)**, **Marcy**, and **Alex (Brandy) Neth**, and step-grandchildren **Claire**, **Charles**, **Blaze**, **Raina**, **Olive**, **Jack**, **Harry**, and **Beatrix**. He was preceded in death by his late wife **Margaret Louise Ormsby**, his father **Harold Eugene Hubbard**, his mother **Lurline Delia Hurlock**, and his step-father **Vernon B. Thompson**. He felt particularly grateful for having been doubly blessed by marriages to two precious wives, showing how he experienced love, which multiplies, which does not divide. He graduated from Oberlin College and Yale Divinity School. Following his ordination to the ministry in the Presbyterian Church USA, he initially served parishes in Tulsa and Bristow, Oklahoma. Following that, he was Pastor of Southminster Presbyterian Church in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, and of Central Presbyterian Church in Austin, Texas. He also served as Interim Minister in Congregational UCC churches in Houston and Austin, Texas, because of that denomination's "Open and Affirming" commitment to including in its membership and leadership of all persons, of whatever sexual orientation, as the local Presbyterian Church U.S.A. is now enabled to do.

Personals (cont.)
by Pat Oakes

In the midst of his pastorates, **Rich** pursued interests in communications and community service. He served as host of interfaith television series in Chicago and Austin. His series "Preaching the Practice" appeared in The Clergy Journal. Following his retirement, he served as a Volunteer in Mission for Media Literacy for the Office of Communications PCUSA. "Bloom Where You Are Planted" was the phrase that **Rich** took as the title for writing a hymn in early years of ministry and a journal/notebook, representing for him the heart of spirituality. He brought that conviction to Fort Collins where he moved in 2006 with his wife, **Jane**, to be near family. Soon thereafter, he became active in the Fort Collins Area Interfaith Council, serving as its President and hosting the Interfaith Dialogue series on KRFC radio. He also provided leadership in the founding of Faith Family Hospitality (now called The Family Housing Network of Fort Collins – FHN), the weekly overnight welcoming of homeless families into the facilities of faith communities on a rotating basis. In 2015, he was recipient of "The Gold Glove Award," presented by the Homelessness Prevention Initiative for "Catching families before they fall." Rich also will be remembered for playing the piano, especially for his composing such light-hearted songs as "The Biblically Inclusive Rag." As he made his final transition, it was with gratitude for all the other signs of "Amazing Grace" shared by and with his beloved family and friends. A memorial service will be held at First Presbyterian Church of Fort Collins at 5 p.m. on May 13. Memorial gifts may be made to the Family Housing Network of Fort Collins, 1601 S. Lemay Ave., Suite 103, Fort Collins, CO 80525.



4/1/01 Rich Thompson on our centennial Sunday

Betty Bodman and **Andrea Haksoon Low** learned a great deal on their recent trip to Cuba. Here is part three of their adventures contributed by **Andrea Haksoon Low**. "At the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM), the director, **Dr. Damodar** (two in our group who were of Tamil heritage were amazed to find a physician in Cuba with a common heritage), told us the history of and answered our questions about ELAM. Of course, it was fascinating to learn how ELAM educates students from all over the world, but the greatest delight came from walking around the campus and spontaneously encountering students from Syria, Burundi, Venezuela, and many other countries, and even a student from Atlanta, Georgia. It was inspiring to hear them express what they were learning about life from their interactions with the other students as well as their goals in returning to their home communities to provide medical care to the underserved in those communities (the original commitment they made upon matriculation and unburdened by educational debt). Another highlight was the Literacy Museum, symbolically located in the fort where **Fulgencio Batista** lived, as all military installations were to be converted to schools during the revolution. Many of us had conflicted views about the literacy campaign - how admirable it was that brigades of hundreds of thousands of young people, including idealistic Americans, taught the illiterate population how to read (text, Braille, etc.) in less than one year, but also how rigidly ideological and militaristic the promotion of the campaign was. We visited the Cuban National Center for Sex Education (CENESEX), where we had a lively discussion with staff on the 2022 Family Code changes to marriage equality, intrafamily violence, sexual assault,



Early 2000s—Gordon Hauck, Rev. John Towery, Ben White, Rev. Rich Thompson, Rose Lancaster, Rev. George Ricker, and Mel Oakes

Personals (cont.) by Pat Oakes

abortion, redistribution of domestic and care work, gender identities, and public education. At the Lavastida Christian Center in Santiago de Cuba, we were very fortunate to learn from the wisdom of the many organizers of the center's projects and also from the wisdom of the two in our group who are Old Testament theologians as they led a bilingual Bible study on Israel/Palestine. I would be remiss not to mention the celebratory neighborhood block party we attended. Throughout the tour, we experienced frequent blackouts, the effects of the U.S. Department of Treasury prohibition on using funds from American banks (a Canadian kindly offered to use her credit card at a government-run store - where everything was priced in U.S. dollars although the store did not accept currency - and we reimbursed her for the food and paper products we purchased to take to the casa where we stayed), a complex black market economy, obvious signs of mass emigration, and constant repetition of the phrase, "due to the U.S. blockade, we do not have ____." Our guide, **Javier Huerta**, smirked cynically every time he translated the refrain."

Jonathan Geer reports, "**Roberto** and I hosted a little chamber music concert at our place last weekend and one of the pieces we played was this composition of mine that I wrote in honor of [Nodie Murphy](#) and her many years of ministry at the [Congregational Church of Austin, UCC](#). I'm happy to finally have some kind of recording of it! We love you Nodie!" Click this link to hear **Amy Harris** on violin, **Tony Rogers** on cello, and **Jonathan Geer** on piano. Listen to "**Nodie's Piece**" here. <https://youtu.be/wAcNy8uz0cU?si=QjqsBNK8y1YJ2EKD>

Seven members of our congregation were treated to a delicious Iftar dinner on Wednesday, April 3rd, that our friends from the Dialogue Institute Turkish-American community served at our church at 6:30 pm. A very interesting presentation on Islam and Ramadan was made prior to dinner—waiting until sunset to break the fast. As those of us who have been part of this gathering and meal to break the Ramadan fast at sunset know, it is always a wonderful opportunity to get to know each other, to learn about our Muslim siblings, and to learn about this community. With the recent elections in Turkey, the recent attack on Palestinian Muslims in Austin, and the strong feelings far beyond the Middle East about Gaza, we may find this time to be a way just to sit with our Muslim siblings to listen.



4/3/24 Rabia S. Orhan from the Turkish Dialogue Institute made a very interesting presentation prior to the Ramadan Iftar dinner at the church



4/3/24 Ramadan Iftar dinner at the church with Andrea Haksoon Lo, Beth Gleason, Reuel and Liz Nash participating

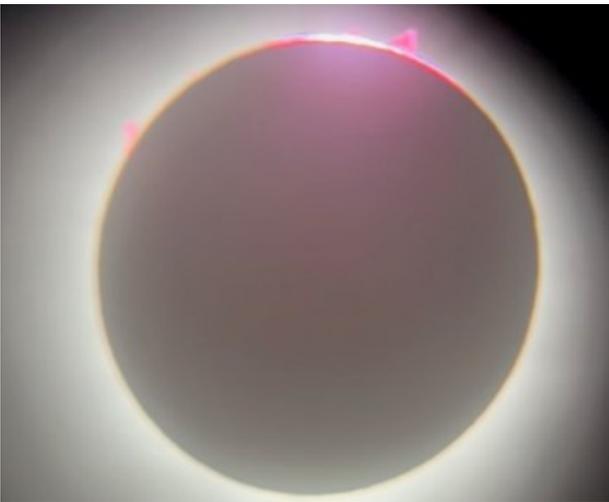


4/7/24 Beth Gleason was in town from Maine with dear friend Joan Mueller on the day of the family memorial service for Bill Mueller at the home of Joan and Bill's daughter

Personals (cont.)
by Pat Oakes

The eclipse of April 8th provided a lot of entertainment for our church family. **Cheryl Appel** reports, "I was in a park in St Joseph Missouri for the eclipse, which wasn't full but was still fun! It was a little surreal to feel the temperature drop and hear the ducks vocalizing in what sounded more like barking than quacking. And although I had heard that the eclipse might inspire lovesickness in turtles, in the pond I was watching, the turtles floated as if they were sleeping (or maybe comatose!), with their necks outstretched and their heads toward the sun."

Liz and Reuel Nash went to a friend's ranch in Marble Falls. Among the friends there were three astrophysics graduate students from Arizona State University. The clouds came and went but they got good views through their glasses and **Reuel's** 8" telescope with a solar filter. The telescope is not set up for photography, but one of the students was able to get this photo with her phone.



4/8/24 One of the students with Liz and Reuel Nash at a ranch in Marble Falls got this eclipse photo with her phone!

Pam Tucker (CEO of Utility Composites) shares, "The employees at Utility Composites gathered together in hopes of seeing something for the eclipse of April 8, 2024, despite the forecast that it would be overcast. Viewing glasses had been purchased well in advance. Production machines were shut down, and work stopped, and everyone gathered initially in the break room for such "Eclipse themed snacks and beverages" as Moon Pies, Sun Chips, Capri Sun, Sunny D, Blue Moon Beer, Cosmic brownies, and Eclipse gum, before moving outside in hopes of a glimpse of an eclipse. And the clouds parted, and we saw the whole thing. It was amazing and fun! Then back to work—mean ol' boss!"



Image from web and on Utility Composites party announcement

Carolyn Thompson says, "Here at Westminster in Austin where I now live, we had a big eclipse celebration with hotdogs and all the trimmings, quesadillas, cookies and assorted beverages for everyone. There were three big screens set up in our assembly hall for watching the televised images of the eclipse in various parts of the country. Everyone was given a pair of the special glasses, so many of us went outside to try to catch glimpses of the eclipse among the clouds."

Mel and Pat Oakes didn't travel far for their eclipse viewing experience. They joined six other neighbors on folding chairs in the middle of Briargrove Dr. where they live. It was quite cloudy, but every now and again there would be a good view. They could then hear lots of cheers coming from nearby Zilker Park. Just as predicted, the temperature dropped, the streetlights came on, the birds stopped singing, it was eerily dark — it was amazing. Someone on the next street over fired off some firecrackers as a part of their celebration.

Andrea Haksoon Low traveled a bit for her eclipse show and says, "We joined a large group of my former colleagues and their extended families in Granite Shoals. My brother drove from Nashville, TN. Our classmate, **Sidney**, and his wife, **Stacey**, who lives in Victoria, TX, picked us up at 5 a.m. because we expected the worst, as Judge **Andy Brown** had declared a state of disaster due to anticipated traffic. The roads were clear, so we even had time to charge the Tesla in Bee Cave. Lots of fancy telescopes with fancy software were there when we arrived. At 1:36 p.m., we celebrated with champagne and a countdown. 10, 9, 8 . . . 2, 1, TOTALITY!!!"

The **Harrises** (**Warinda**, husband **John**, sons **Alden**, **Will**, and **Warinda's** mom **Barbara Johnson**) viewed the recent total solar eclipse from their backyard (except for **Barbara** who was more inter-

Personals (cont.) by Pat Oakes

ested in the TV coverage), where the clouds parted just in time to give them all a spectacular view! Everyone (except Dasha the dog) was thrilled and impressed.



4/8/24 Dasha, the Harrises dog, was not impressed with the eclipse in spite of wearing special glasses



4/8/24 Totality as seen from the Harrises back yard.

Joy Penticuff and her husband waited and waited and saw a daylight sky veiled with clouds. Then it got really dark and the solar yard lights came on. And the clouds opened, and we saw the eclipse through our special glasses at the height of totality. Awesome!!

Mel and Pat Oakes were delighted to have her great-nephew **Scott Blatnik** and her niece **Shanti Blatnik** visit Sunday and Monday, April 29th—29th. **Shanti** was helping **Scott** (a chemical engineering student in Cincinnati) with the drive home from Corpus Christi where he has been interning at a chemical company to Eastlake, Ohio. **Scott** was sorry to miss singing in the choir (which he has done twice while he has been in Texas), but they all enjoyed dinner at The Salt Lick in Driftwood on Sunday evening and then on Monday morning the intrepid four climbed Mount Bonnell. With **Pat** holding on to the railing and **Mel** offering a helping hand when the railings disappeared, the four made it to the top in great time, — 102 steps up and a rise of 781 feet—but who's counting!!!



4/29/24 Mel Oakes, Scott Blatnik, Pat Oakes, and Shanti Blatnik at the top of Mt. Bonnell—hooray!!!!

John Goff says, "Gail and I, along with our daughter **Megan**, drove out to the Hill Country where we joined an eclipse watch gathering at one of the wineries (Hilmy) where we are club members. The winery had a special release that they called "Penumbra", which was a Petite Syrah. The early part of the eclipse had many moments of clear viewing. At totality, which lasted five minutes for us, the clouds moved in but cleared just enough toward the end for us to get a great view of the actual penumbra, which paired well with the Penumbra wine. It was a special experience."

Personals (cont.) by Pat Oakes

Reuel Nash retires on Friday May 3rd. He recalls his career, "I will have worked one week shy of 17 years at Google. I worked on the same project that entire time: image processing for Google Earth and Google Maps. I've been an individual contributor and Tech Lead. Prior to that I was at nVidia for four years, working on performance simulation for graphics chips. Prior to that I was a software engineer at Intrinsic Graphics -- a video game startup. That's where I worked when we moved to Austin in 2002. This company was formed by several engineers who had worked at Silicon Graphics, and was the sister startup to Keyhole, which eventually was bought by Google and became Google Earth. Prior to that I was a software manager for 12 years at Silicon Graphics -- SGI. I managed the team that developed

the internal software for their high-end graphics systems. It was neat to take the kids to see Disney's Aladdin and have them see the SGI logo at the end of the movie and know that I worked on the graphics systems Disney used. Prior to that I was a Unix Kernel developer at Mips Computer Systems. Prior to that I worked at Hewlett-Packard, starting off as an integrated circuit designer, where I was one of the few EE's who could program, later becoming one of the few programmers who really knew how the circuitry worked. I went to college at Texas A&M University, getting a BS and an MS in Electrical Engineering and taking as many Computer Science programming classes as I could fit in." Good work, **Reuel!!!** Enjoy a wonderful and interesting retirement.



5/19/13 Reuel and Liz Nash celebrated their 36th anniversary on the 19th of May—number 47 approaches apace! Happy retirement, Reuel and Liz!

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

Happy memories of Slumber Falls

We don't remember when the last CCA retreat was held at Slumber Falls, but there was a time when we went there in the spring and the fall—usually for a Saturday evening overnight. Does anyone remember when the last one was held? We do know—by looking at the photos-- what a wonderful time it was to think, plan, enjoy the out-of-doors, sing, visit, communicate and share time together.



1983 Retreat at Slumber Falls, October 1983--? David Bartholomew, Paula Briggs, Tommie Pinkard, Sara Ross, John Camden, Marcy Busick, Levern Johnston, — Jonathan Briggs, ? and Rambie Briggs on accordion



9/22/1989 At Slumber Falls--Clark Hubbs, Bambi ?, Sara Ross, and Cathy Hubbs

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.



10/2000 Fall retreat at Slumber Falls--around the table, Tommie Pinkard, Steve Domingue, Norma Hawes, Setsuko Kaneda, Nodie Murphy, Cathy Hubbs, Yoshi Kaneda



10/2000 Fall retreat at Slumber Falls — Rev. Yoshi Kaneda with Dr. Michael Murray, resource leader as we discuss the future of the church and its location — note the mission/vision statement at the upper left



4/05/03 Dennis Murphy at Slumber Falls

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.



4/28/07 Chow time at Slumber Falls--Dave R. Sara R., Doyal Pinkard, Hannah Norton. Greg Futch, Tom V., Nodie M., Barbara Burnham, Marilyn Vaché, Marilyn Harris, Dan Jeffrey, Jaime Hadley, ?, Vic Appel, Matt Blackstock, Mel Oakes.



4/28/07 Church retreat at Slumber Falls when Jaime Hadley was baptized---l-r Nodie Murphy, ?, Tommie Pinkard, Mathis Blackstock, Barbara Burnham, Liz Nash, Betty Bodman, Hannah Norton, and Jaime Hadley

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.



4/24/10 A beautiful afternoon at Slumber Falls during our spring retreat



4/24/10 Chow time at Slumber Falls--Mel Oakes, Robin Chapman, Jaime Hadley, Greg Futch, Christy Kuehner, Marilyn Vaché, Bill Mueller, Carla Cheatham, ?, Joan Mueller, Bill Beardall, Sarah Bentley, Bob Brehan