

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt

In the Gold's Gym where I work out, I always see a bunch of new folks in early January pumping iron, running on the treadmills, huffing and puffing, stealing side-long glances of themselves in the mirrors, and flirting with one another in their new tight-fitting **Under Armour**. By March, most of these new folks disappear, and things are back to normal for us regular year-round gym rats. No doubt, New Year's resolutions were made to get fit, drop a few pounds, stop being a couch potato, or fit into the old prom dress. But we all know what happens to most New Year's resolutions.



"Nature's Perfection"

Art Copyright Sharon Cummings

The only New Year's resolution I've managed to keep is the one I made to never make another New Year's resolution. I'm not bragging. It's been pretty easy. But all jesting aside, the New Year may give us pause to consider our life, the passage of time, endings and beginnings, what we've done and left undone, where we've been and where we're headed. We may stop to ponder our growth as a human being. And what it even means to grow as a human being.

To grow means to outgrow. Sometimes growing means transcending yet including who or what we've been. Sometimes it means moving beyond and leaving behind who or what we've been. Ask yourself: Is there still room for my growth in the New Year, some way I'm being pushed, pulled, beckoned, or challenged to outgrow who or what I am?

I'll leave you with the following three stanzas of Oliver Wendell Holmes' poem, "The Chambered Nautilus."

Year after year beheld the silent toil
That spreads his lustrous coil;
Still, as the spiral grew,
He left the past year's dwelling for the new,
Stole with soft step its shining archway through,
Built up its idle door,
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no more.

Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,
Child of the wandering sea,
Cast from her lap, forlorn!
From the dead lips a clearer note is born
Than ever Triton blew from wreathed horn;
While on mine ears it rings,
Through the deep cave of thought I hear a voice that sings—

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
 As thy swift seasons roll!
 Leave thy low-vaulted past!
 Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
 Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
 Till thou at length are free,
 Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!

TOM



Cameron Goff gave a post-coffee hour slide presentation about his summer trip with Amigos to Ecuador.

Church Leadership

Trustees Chair	John Goff
Deacons Chair	Jaime Hadley
Outreach Team	Reuel Nash & Warinda Harris
Moderator	Barbara Burnham & Bill Beardall
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Pam Tucker
Christian Education	Rachel Dietz
Coordinators	Van Herd
Clerk	Betty Bodman
Historian	Pat Oakes
Web mistress	Sara Ross

Our church's **Annual Meeting** will be held on **Sunday, January 25th**, following worship. Please make every effort to attend this meeting, as we celebrate our past year of ministry and look forward to our upcoming year together.

Back Bay Mission Welcomes Rev. Alice Graham, Ph.D., as Executive Director

Back Bay Mission is pleased to announce Rev. Alice Graham, Ph.D. as our new Executive Director.

A native Chicagoan, Dr. Graham has lived and worked in Northern Virginia, North Carolina, and on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Most recently, she served as the Executive Director of Interfaith Partnerships, formerly Mississippi Coast Interfaith Disaster Task Force. She has also served as the Executive Director and co-founder of Pastoral Ministries Institute in Reston, Virginia, and as Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling at Hood Theological Seminary in Salisbury, North Carolina.

Dr. Graham holds a B.A. from Spelman College, an M.Div from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, and a Ph.D. from Northwestern University. She is a certified Fellow of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors. She is ordained in the American Baptist Churches, USA.

Throughout her professional life, Dr. Graham has been active in building relationships with community organizations that serve vulnerable communities. A tremendously exciting aspect of her work on the Gulf Coast has been the opportunity to build relationships and collaborations with people from diverse faith, racial, and ethnic perspectives. She is excited about the new opportunities offered by Back Bay Mission to expand her commitment to collaborate with other coastal organizations in building sustainable communities.

Dr. Graham began as Executive Director on January 5, 2015.

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Thanks!

Gail Christeson, Treasurer
 Congregational Church of Austin, United Church of Christ

Personals

by Pat Oakes

Our beloved pastor emeritus, **The Reverend Dr. John Chesley Towery**, died the day after Thanksgiving, **Nov. 28, 2014**. He had been in failing health for some months, especially since the death of his wife of 63 years, **Eleanor**, who died this past March. The funeral service was held on **December 1, 2014**, at the memorial chapel of **Cook/Walden Capital Parks** funeral home, with **Rev. Tom VandeStadt** officiating and Mel and Pat Oakes sharing remembrances. Pallbearers were all family members—**Ches Towery, Tommy Johnson, Danny Masters, Ricky Masters, K.C. Towery** and **Andrew Johnson**. A number of familiar faces were there from the Towery years of ministry including **Tommie and Doyal Pinkard, Dave and Sara Ross, Garry Cole, Michael Adams, George Carruthers** and **Marilyn Gaddis, Kathleen Strong** with her cousin **Steffen Saustrup, Richard Swallow** (former member of the church and the one who designed the Towery education wing), **Liz Nash**, and **John Gage**. In that sad time, it was a joy to to see **Rev. Yoshi Kaneda** who came all the way from **San Diego, California**, to pay his respects to John. Yoshi was the pastor who came to us in 1990 after John retired. It meant so much to the family, especially **Ches, Mary, and Sally**, that he was able to come. The Deacons are planning for a service for **Sunday, January 18**, where John will be honored and remembered. This will be an opportunity for our newer members to learn of John's many contributions to the church. The Texas members of the Towery family are planning to attend. If you would like to know more about John, Mel Oakes has put together a web page about John and the family. Go to <http://congregationalchurchofaustin.org>, look on the home page and you will see the link.



Rev. John Towery at the church centennial dinner--March 31, 2001 held at the Austin Presbyterian Seminary.



Garry Cole came from San Antonio and former pastor Yoshi Kaneda came all the way from San Diego, CA, to attend John Towery's funeral. From left—Garry Cole, Yoshi Kaneda, and Dennis and Nodie Murphy.



Pastor John Towery (center) looking at his new office--1976 Stella Morrison, Danny Masters, Bonnie Tarvin, Betty Tarvin, Betsy Russell, Hildegard Everett, John Towery, Carrie Coleman?, Garry Cole, Alfred Wupperman. We remodeled John's office as a bicentennial/75th birthday gift to the church. That room is now the *Corliss Gaspari* library.

Annie Nash performed as **Drosselmeyer** in the **Austin Children's Nutcracker**. The Director said "We win the diversity prize this year: a mixed race couple (black & white) with a Chinese daughter and a Mexican son, a man playing a woman (Mother Ginger) and a woman playing a man (Drosselmeyer)!" Photos of the performances can be seen at <http://reuelnash.smugmug.com/Dance/ACB-Nutcracker-2014/> Ellie is working on a Master's Degree in **International Development** at the **University of Montreal** and polishing her abilities to write academic papers in French. **Becky** is in **Taipei, Taiwan**, working on a degree in **Global Studies** at **Long Island University Global College**. She has visited with **Buddhist** groups and local indigenous groups to study culture through religion.

3 The whole family will be together in **Cancun** after Christmas.

Brazos Association News

January

by Liz Nash

The Brazos Association and United Christian Church were hosts to an unusual and uplifting service of ordination recently. On Sunday, December 7th, **Crystal Silva-McCormick** was ordained at United. She was a UCC member in discernment (in care) in the **Eastern Iowa Association**, has a call to a Presbyterian church that is part of the Mission Presbytery that includes the Austin area, is a Master of Divinity graduate of **Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary**, is a Ph.D. student in **Muslim Christian Relations** at the **Lutheran School of Theology** in Chicago, and is teaching at the **University of Texas El Paso** in Religious Studies. The Brazos Association ordained Crystal on behalf of her home association, **Eastern Iowa**. Crystal has many friends in Austin who helped lead the service, including her older children, three interfaith friends (Muslim and Jewish), preacher **Rev. Dr. Whit Bodman**, **Rev. John Gage**, and several others. It was a service that reflected her interfaith involvement and work on immigration issues in the context of her committed Christian faith. We appreciate the hospitality of **United Christian**, the cooperation between Church and Ministry chair **Anne Wehrly** and the Eastern Iowa Association, and the gifts of ministry that Crystal so clearly has. We welcome her to the Brazos Association as she moves here with her husband and children in early February.

Our prayers will be with the South Texas Association when they meet at **Faith UCC** in **New Braunfels** on January 17th to vote on whether to merge with the Brazos Association. If the vote is positive, our Association has al-

ready voted to accept the South Texas churches pending this vote. We will have plenty of work to do if and when that happens to work out bylaws, meeting schedules with churches at greater distances, etc. But at this point, let's pray for wisdom and God's guidance for our brothers and sisters in South Texas as they discern their calling as an Association.

The next Brazos Association meeting will be held at **Evangelical UCC** in **Lyons** at 4 pm on Sunday March 22nd. Lyons has moved the schedule from our customary 3 pm time to 4 pm to allow the South Texas churches time to travel after worship if the merger happens. All from our churches are—we hope you will plan to join us.

Finally, friends and family, including the Congregational Church of Austin, give thanks for the life of **John Towery, Pastor Emeritus of Congregational**. John died on November 28th and his funeral service was held on December 3rd, with **Tom VandeStadt** officiating and long-time church members **Pat and Mel Oakes** sharing the memories many had sent them about John. His great legacy of commitment to caring ministry, hospitality, and social justice continues to influence Congregational Church and all who knew him.

Blessings in Christ
Liz Nash
Brazos Association Minister

From *The Austin American Statesman*

For the past 12 years, volunteers at the Congregational Church of Austin have been feeding the homeless and hungry on Christmas Day. "Serving the homeless is a big part of our ministry because of the population around the neighborhood," said pastor Tom VandeStadt. "It seems like an appropriate way to celebrate the birth of Christ who said, 'I was hungry and you fed me.'" (RESHMA KIRPALANI / AMERICAN STATESMAN) Check out the photos at the following link:

<http://m.statesman.com/gallery/news/local/congregational-church-austin-serves-free-christmas/gCOF5/#6583213>

SAVE THE DATE! HOUSE CONCERT!

Sunday, January 11th - 7 PM

The Triple Dog Dare You Trio

Our own Jonathan, Amy & Colin with surprise musical guests House Concert to help our beloved Slumber Falls Camp end its' fiscal year in the black. Refreshments and yummy treats Contributions welcome if you cant' make it...

At the Nash Residence on Llano Estacado...hosted by the Nash family and Beth Gleason

FMI/RSVP: 512 297 7591

Continued from page 3

Long-ago members (now at **Covenant Presbyterian**), **Susan (Swallow)** and **David Ashton** report that their family is doing well. Susan is still teaching math at **McCallum** and coaching cross-country and track. David still designs electrical systems for buildings. Jonathan graduated from **Austin College**, taught English for 2 1/2 years in Japan, and is now in his third year of law school. **Sarah** graduated from **McMurray College**, is a math teacher in **Taylor**, and is about to get her master's degree. **Jennie** graduated from **St. Bonaventure** on a basketball scholarship, has earned her MBA and found that there is no network here so has gotten certified as a paralegal here in Austin. **Katherine** just graduated in the top ten percent of her class from the **Naval Academy** in **Annapolis** and is a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps headed to flight school in Pensacola. As David says, "We have been truly blessed by our kids."



The cast of the church Christmas pageant. l-r Alden Harris, William Harris, Megan Goff, Savannah Tucker, John Dietz, Francesca Dietz, Harrison Tucker, and Isabella Dietz; teacher Amy Rivera is holding up the words for the cast.



Cheryl Appel was in town recently from Wisconsin and brought her dad Vic to church, shown here with choir member Norma Hawes.



Volunteers helping at the church Christmas dinner for the homeless. Liz and Reuel Nash, Cecile Adam and Dennis Murphy.



The angel of the Lord with Joseph and Mary, and a sleeping shepherd. Isabella Dietz narrating, Megan Goff, John and Francesca Dietz, with Harrison Tucker; choir--Bill Mueller, Nodie Murphy, Greg Futch, Barbara Burnham, Dennis Murphy.



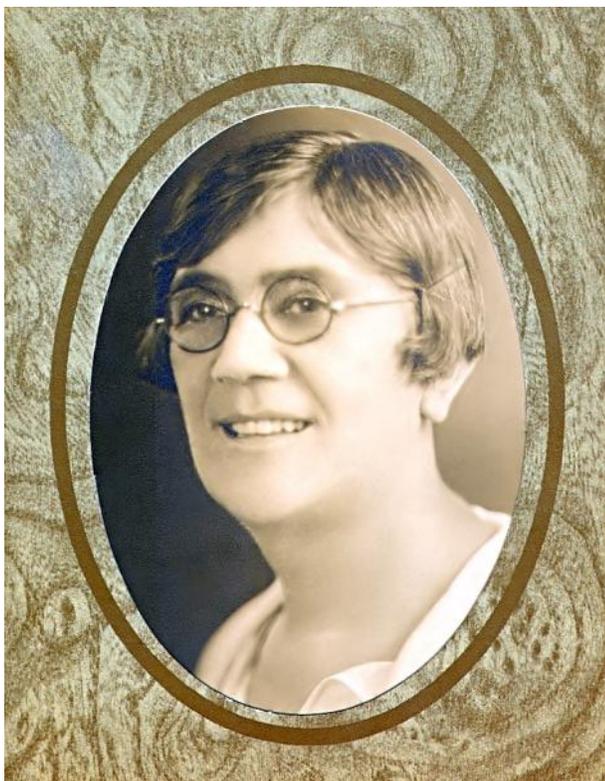
Volunteers helping with the church Christmas dinner for the homeless. Jessica Costello, a new volunteer, Alden Harris and his mother Warinda, Jaime Hadley--Jessica saw the plea for helpers on our church Web site and was among a number of other volunteers who showed to help.

Return Service Requested

Deadline for February Visitor—Jan. 20th

History Corner

If you look at the stained glass window, 4th medallion from the front of the sanctuary on the **Guadalupe** side, you will see one which says, "In loving memory of Hallie Barrickman, 1870-1939."



Hallie Barrickman was **Matt Blackstock's** maternal grandmother. Check Matt's biography on the church web page--<http://congregationalchurchofaustin.org/cca/Mathis%20Blackstock%20Memoir.pdf>- and you will see that Matt says this about his grandmother, "In many ways, **Grandmother Barrickman** was the most important person in our family, that is, on Mother's side of the family. She had a powerful presence and was a quiet and loving person. She enjoyed taking my brother **David**, our cousin **Barbara**, and me out in the woods. We'd walk a couple of hours and she would teach us all kinds of things about Nature. The year that they moved to Austin, 1930, Grandmother Barrickman introduced me to the **Congregational Church** and that's one of the best things that has happened to me." Hallie Barrickman was one of the early members of the church, and the fact that she was responsible for bringing **Mathis** into our midst certainly means she should be held in our loving memory, too.

