

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt



If I tell you climate change is a wicked problem, you might think I just got off the plane from Boston, Mass, where the word wicked is as common as the Red Sox logo. I did live in Boston, and I did think the Sox were wicked, but that's not why I'm saying climate change is a wicked problem. "Wicked problem" is a technical term some researchers are using to describe climate change.

A "wicked problem" is a highly complex and multi-dimensional one that effects a large number of people, all of whom contribute to the problem. People can't agree on a definition of the problem because they look

at it from different perspectives, and the problem is too complex to understand or describe from just one perspective. Because they're unable to agree on the problem, people can't agree on a solution. The various solutions that people do apply don't solve the problem, but instead produce effects that change it, sometimes creating new problems. The problem persists and evolves over time, making it necessary for people to re-evaluate their definitions and solutions in response to changing realities.

Bill McKibben's recent article in *The New Republic*, "A World at War," provides a good illustration of how we can see climate change as a wicked problem. From one perspective, burning fossil fuels that release CO₂ into the atmosphere is the definitive cause of climate change. The scientific consensus says this is true, and the solution is to quickly cut our use of fossil fuels.

McKibben lays out a bold plan for how we can quickly replace fossil fuels with renewables. But in doing so, he reveals how climate change is much more than a scientific and technological problem, it's also a political, economic, social and cultural problem. The scientific and technological issues are deeply entangled with, and complicated by, political, economic, social and cultural issues. Accomplishing the massive mobilization McKibben proposes will require changes in our political, economic, social and cultural institutions, systems and lives.

While we debate what to do and how to do it, the multiple consequences of climate change strike with increasing speed and force around the planet, making the problem even more complex and creating conditions we'll be dealing with for a long time. Super-storms, floods, wildfires, droughts, food shortages, outbreaks of disease, displaced people, massive forced migrations, political instability, economic collapse, violence, species extinction—climate change is producing its effects all around the world and will continue to do so with greater intensity. Because of the instability it's producing, more people are defining climate change as a national security and military problem, one that will increasingly require those kind of solutions. McKibben's war analogy is uncomfortably appropriate.

All of this leads me to ask the question, is climate change the real problem, or is climate change a symptom of a bigger, deeper or more complex problem? I think it's a symptom. But with that said, I wholeheartedly agree with Bill McKibben, the scientific community and the millions of people around the world who're saying we need to cut fossil fuel use. And do so now! Cutting fossil fuels is a solution. It's absolutely essential. If we don't, we guarantee a dramatic increase of suffering on this planet in the years to come.

But what about the *real* problem. Again, McKibben's war analogy is helpful. In his analogy, the rise of the axis powers and their attempt to dominate the world through military force created a problem for the US and its allies. The solution was to rapidly mobilize resources on a massive scale in order to militarily defeat these powers.

On the face of it, that's true. But one could argue that the bigger, deeper or more complex problem—the *real* problem—was humanity's proclivity for violent conflict and that WWII was a massive expression of this human trait on a global scale. Human beings have a tendency to fear, hate or envy other humans, and to organize their resources to attack, dominate, exploit and kill them. Why? There are probably lots of complex reasons. War is a symptom of what's happening in the human heart and psyche. It's in the human heart and psyche that we find the *real* problem. The allied victory ended WWII, but it didn't solve the problem of human violence.

McKibben argues that we need a rapid and massive mobilization of resources now to replace fossil fuels with renewables to solve climate change. On the face of it, that's absolutely true. Just as the allies really did need to defeat the axis powers, we really do need to eliminate fossil fuels. But that won't solve the *real* problem, of which climate change is a symptom.

What's the *real* problem? From my perspective, and most simply put, humanity hasn't learned how to love the earth. Just as we haven't learned how to love one another. Not a trite or romantic love, but a deep and profound experience of human solidarity with one another, a deep and sincere desire

to care for one another. Individually and collectively, we need to learn how to live in a far more open-hearted way with one another and the earth. This will not put an end to the complex problems humans will face, but it will enable us to work together more harmoniously and fruitfully in response to them.

Yes! Do all in your power to eliminate fossil fuels! It's a solution, an absolutely essential one. Cut your carbon footprint. Advocate, vote, protest. But ask yourself, is the problem bigger, deeper or more complex? If so, what must I do in response?

Church Leadership

Trustee Co-Chairs	Don Brown & Bill Campbell
Deacons Chair	Jen Howicz
Outreach Team	Reuel Nash & John Goff
Moderator Co-Chairs	Barbara Burnham & Bill Beardall
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Pam Tucker
Christian Education	Rachel Dietz
Coordinators	John Burlinson
Clerk	Betty Bodman
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Webmistress	Shannon Quisenberry
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

Another Blessing

One of my favorite parts of summer at the Congregational Church of Austin is the Worship Gift series we have during the choir's hiatus. Although I miss the anthems and the excitement of preparing them, I look forward to learning new things from and about the seekers in our congregation.

In June we heard from two members who are passionate about poetry--Cecile Adam and Greg Futch. Mel Oakes introduced us to another almost forgotten person whose name appears on one of our lovely windows in the sanctuary.

In July Whit Bodman led us through his creative Communion liturgy and Ruth Koenig shared her faith journey with us, a path winding all the way to China and finally to our front door. The instrumentalists of our trio joined with me to sing a Baroque a cappella piece--who knew? Then they helped Bill Beardall "fly away" as he and his guitar led our singing. Jaime Hadley, who loves "This Is My Song," gave us more insight into the Sibelius tune that we enjoy so much.

In August Tony Rogers, our cellist, wanted to sing "Count Your Blessings Instead of Sheep," one of his grandmother's favorites, and Betty Appel proposed singing "Bless This House," so we ended up singing a lot of hymns about blessings and having a wonderful time. Marilyn Vaché shared with us how the Discipleship Group at our church supports her spiritual search. And Rambie Briggs will give us his support on the accordion as we end the summer with a hymn sing.

When I was planning the service about blessings, help poured in from Jo Jensen, Beth Gleason and Cecile Adam. It seemed that the more we put into it, the more we got out of it. Often the preparations for the worship gifts yield many treasures for the givers as well as for the receivers. We are overflowing with gifts; some will spill over into the Fall. Beth Placek has been planning her presentation for months, but awaits the choir's return for their participation.

We have had "showers of blessing" this summer--gifts to us and gifts from us to others. Accepting a gift bestows a blessing on the giver, so we have all been involved in this cycle of blessings. Start counting!

—Nodie Murphy

Church Announcements

The Front Porch Lunch ministry is in need of a few more volunteers to serve lunches. Lunch is served to area homeless (mostly LifeWorks guests) every Thursday of the month in our Fellowship Hall. If you are interested, contact John Goff or our church Administrator, Rimma Aguirre.

Micah 6, the consortium of 11 University area churches working together to meet the needs of the homeless, need food and servers for its weekly **Sunday afternoon drop-in center** at University Baptist church. The drop-in needs volunteers who can **cook** a healthy dish for about 25 people, or come to the drop-in center to **help serve** those dishes. More information on the drop-in center can be found at: <http://m6sydic.weebly.com/>

Micah 6 also needs clothes for its **Fig Leaf clothing distribution center**. Donations can be brought to our Sunday morning worship. If you have any questions or need more information, please see our church's Micah 6 representative, Whit Bodman.

Church Announcements, continued

Say “Hi” to your Outreach Coordinators

John Goff and Reuel Nash are serving as “Outreach Coordinators” this year. As most of you may be aware, the outreach coordinator position is actually quite new. Not long ago we had a Board of Christian Outreach that oversaw our outreach activities. Or at least tried to. The truth is, most of our outreach activities – Freeze Night Shelter, Front Porch Lunch, Micah 6 Food pantry, Green Team, Care Team – are autonomous and self-directed among a dedicated team of volunteers. Outreach happens at our church whether or not we have a Board or a Coordinator. Quoting shamelessly from an insurance company commercial: it’s what we do. In a recent effort to streamline our Church’s governance, we therefore decided, along with Christian Education (which now operates with paid staff), to eliminate the Boards and replace them with two coordinators each.

So: what does an outreach coordinator DO in our church? Or, better yet: what SHOULD an outreach coordinator do? As we see it, we have 3 primary responsibilities:

1. Outreach Coordinators are representatives of, and advocates for, the outreach mission of our church. One of us sits on Coordinating Council, and it is our job to ensure that outreach concerns factor into the church’s decision-making. We are YOUR representatives. If you have any sort of concern about, or idea for outreach activities, speak to Reuel or John and we can ensure that it gets a hearing.

2. Outreach Coordinators are conduits of information regarding outreach. We keep the Coordinating Council informed about outreach activities. We inform the outreach teams about decisions of the coordinating council that affect them. But perhaps our most important function in this regard is to keep the Congregation informed about outreach activities and opportunities for participation. This is where we recognized the most room for improvement – which begins with a renewed effort to present outreach moments. These are indeed good, but we can also do a

lot better in making sure that outreach information is published more often in the church’s newsletter and highlighted on our web page.

3. Outreach Coordinators provide advice to the Trustees regarding our Cooperative Responsibilities budget. Until this year we have only had to recommend minor modifications, but with the large budget shortfall this year, we have had to manage sharp reductions in some of our donations. Those of you who were at last Sunday’s congregational meeting are aware that there was a strong consensus for trying to offset the larger cuts – such as OCWM, Huston-Tillotson, CUE - with special directed offerings through the year. We coordinators were tasked with organizing these events, so this is something that we will incorporate into our budgetary responsibilities.

So there you have it – that’s what an Outreach Coordinator does (or WILL do). Don’t hesitate to chat with John or Reuel about any outreach topic on your mind.

Personals

by Pat Oakes

Sara and Dave Ross enjoyed a rewarding but somewhat rigorous drive to and from **Michigan** in early August. This was to celebrate the **80th birthday** of her brother **Dan** (and incidentally **Dave's 79th**) in **Ann Arbor**, a week of restaurants, cookouts, and a visit to the **Detroit Institute of Arts**. About 20 relatives and friends took part altogether. The drive home was slowed by two days of heavy rain, but they arrived home safely. The picture was taken outside **Weber's Restaurant** on August 8.

prior. She is looking forward to this new chapter in her life, but she still thinks about her kiddos in the Sunday school! She sends her best to everyone.



8/8/16 Dan Schumacher, on his 80th birthday, and his Sisters: Sara Ross, Susan Heath, Caroline Speer, and Deborah Schumacher.

Don Miles reports that his son **Richard G. Miles** - who sat in with us a couple of times in the choir during visits - was one of the 50 GOP security experts who signed an open letter early in August declaring Donald Trump "reckless" and "dangerous" on security issues. Richard was the **National Security Council Director** for North America in the George W. Bush White House.

Anna Kimberley, our former child care giver and Sunday school teacher, left us in 2014 after she graduated from **UT Austin** to attend UT's medical school in **Galveston**. She wrote recently that she was still in Galveston and was going to be graduating on **Friday, August 12**, with a degree in **Physical Therapy**. She has also accepted a job working for **Houston Methodist** in the pediatric field. She started on **August 29th** and was to be taking her board exam just a couple of days



Summer 2016 Betty Bodman with her son-in-law Greg and the large enough to eat small-mouth bass she caught while vacationing in Canada

Betty and Whit Bodman traveled up to **Jersey City** to visit with their daughter **Elizabeth**, son-in-law **Greg**, and granddaughter **Clara**. They all tugged into a car and drove up to **Canada**, to the **Lake region** southwest of **Ottawa**, and camped out on an island for five days with some of Greg's family. This is something Greg's family does every year, but it was Whit and Betty's first time. Greg's family supplied all the gear the Bodmans needed, including fishing rods and at least 10 varieties of Oreo cookies. There were four rules: 1) there are no rules; 2) see rule number one; 3) do what your parents tell you to do; 4) don't be a Butthead. (Can you say that in the Visitor?-- Apparently one may do so.) Neither Betty nor Whit have done much fishing, i.e. pretty much none. The only one to catch a fish big enough to eat was Betty. It was a small mouth bass with a very big mouth. It was a wonderful trip with five kids and five dogs. The parents and grandparents could usually tell them apart. They all made it back to Jersey City, and then back to Texas. In more summer excitement, Betty

has taken up **knitting**. The socks are flying off the needles. Every once in a while she has to borrow Whit's foot so he knows that they will all fit him. Whit has been working on a book on the **Qur'an** – a reader's guide for Christians. It is coming along slowly. Whit has a lot of literature to catch up on but will have three chapters done to peddle to publishers. Books on Islam for the general public are popular, so he is optimistic. Whit spends many Sundays now going to various area churches to teach classes on Islam. Sometimes Whit can make it back to our church, sometimes not, depending on how far he has to go. Whit considers this a very important part of his job.

Tommie Pinkard is getting nicely settled in in her new apartment (a large living area, a large bedroom and bath, a tiny kitchen, and a patio) at **College Walk Retirement Community in Brevard, NC**. She admits that it has been really hard without **Doyal**--they used to love to watch the **Olympics** together--and the political conventions. However, she is making new friends. Her niece **Kay** from **Tucson** was in town recently visiting her parents **Wes and Carol Pinkard Branning**, and she got Tommie's phone answering machine set up for her. A new friend was planning to take her to the **Unitarian Church** in Brevard (no UCC there). She is giving the women's book club a try and is enjoying getting some plants for her tiny patio (3 hibiscus and a begonia so far). She couldn't bear to keep driving Doyal's van, so she traded it in at the Honda place in Brevard and got a new **Honda Accord**. She hasn't gotten a NC driver's license yet, but is registered to vote thanks to **Betsy Russell** (**Stephen Russell's** mom) who sent her the necessary materials after Betsy and **Rollin's** recent visit last month. She gets good exercise every evening when she walks the almost a full block (inside) to the dining hall. The food is very good, she reports. Son **Chris** will be visiting from **California** in **September**. She also reports that David's daughter **Daphne** will start kindergarten after Labor Day in a gifted and talented public school program. The Pinkards' home here in Austin is being completely remodeled by their neighbor, a realtor who bought the house.

Heart of Texas Association News

September

by Liz Nash

It is always a joy to invite our Association to an ordination. The Heart of Texas Association will ordain Beth Gleason to ministry in the United Church of Christ at 5 pm, Sunday, September 11, at Trinity Church of Austin, 4001 Speedway, with a reception to follow. She came to the Congregational Church of Austin, where she has been a member for several years, from Trinity before this church became a United Methodist / UCC union church, and began her seminary training and journey toward ordination there. We are grateful for the hospitality of Trinity and the friendship between these two churches as they join together to host this ordination. Beth has been called to be the pastor of Christ Congregational UCC in Ft. Morgan, Colorado, with her ministry at that church to begin on October 1. We invite our Association church members to celebrate this holy occasion with us. Beth invites clergy to wear robes and red stoles.

It is also always a joy to share good, uplifting news - - this time from children and youth across our Association. UCC churches are tied together in covenant, and we have some wonderful examples this summer from our kids.

As many of you know, Washington County suffered enormous flooding last May. Goodwill Baptist Church, a neighbor church of Friedens Church of Washington, had part of its building lifted from its foundations and was completely flooded. At the recent Friedens Church of Washington Vacation Bible School, the children sent their offering to their neighbors at Goodwill. Responding to a challenge from Pastor Greg Felder, the kids collected over \$200. Because of this milestone, Greg stepped up to a local version of the ice bucket challenge, sitting for all of the kids to pour cups of icy water on his head. More money was given, along with donations of goods for Goodwill Baptist to sell in a rummage sale. Thanks be to God for the covenantal generosity of

these kids, and for all of our kids reached out in love to others this summer.

Our great group of youth and adults who went to the National Youth Event was such an inspiration in their passion, interest, and spirit. They enthusiastically participated in worship, workshops on a myriad of faith related topics, and community with UCC and Disciples of Christ youth from across the US and other countries. The speakers they heard included (among others) a 16 year old young woman who wrote a widely used app that asks people to stop and rethink potentially bullying social media cyberposts, a young man who has traveled and raised money for many charities for several years with his music, and a 14 year old young woman from Pakistan who leads a campaign, at personal risk, against child marriage. Our youth showed such enthusiasm and dedication to the challenges to live their faith that it was an inspiration to all of the adults with them. Several of our Association youth and adults signed sympathy cards and a rainbow flag that four of us took to the street shrine that has grown in front of the Orlando Pulse nightclub where so many, most just slightly older than our youth, were killed. (See <https://sccucc.org/a-visit-to-pulse/> for an account by Rev. Mary Wilson of the visit to Orlando Pulse).

And a reminder: you are all invited to our Fall Association Meeting, Saturday, October 29th, 10 am through lunch, at St. John's UCC in Burton. We hope you will put it on your calendar.

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash
Heart of Texas Association Minister

Personals (continued)

by Pat Oakes



Dr. Clay Green, President TXST United Campus Ministry Board and Marilyn Gaddis - Luncheon, 8/19/16

Since their **Upper Mississippi Cruise** was re-routed last summer due to high water, **Marilyn Gaddis** and **George Carruthers** tried again this summer and completed the trip in July. As they were departing for AUS, they learned that their Southwest flight to **Minneapolis** had been cancelled. They had to scramble to find another flight that day to meet the cruise group. To top off the day, Marilyn's suitcase was left at the Minneapolis airport, necessitating a taxi ride to the airport at midnight. The next day the cruise company had to bus the group to **Red Wing, MN** because the boat couldn't pass under the bridge at **St. Paul**. Despite the "hiccups," the cruise on the **Queen of the Mississippi** proved to be very comfortable with lots of delicious food and drink, delightful lectures and entertainment. Since the cruise theme was "**Mark Twain**," an actor, impersonating Twain, provided interesting programs from his writings. There were shore excursions at **La Crosse, Dubuque, Daven-**

port, Hannibal, and St. Louis. Most of the staff were energetic young students fulfilling their "internships" in hotel management. **Marilyn and George** found that they were among the "younger seniors" on the cruise. Also, Marilyn was honored on her retirement from the **Texas State University United Campus Ministry Board** at a luncheon on **August 19th**. Originally, **John Towery** had asked her to join him on the Board representing the UCC and she remained on the Board for over 30 years! She held all of the local elective offices, as well as **State Chair** of the **Texas United Campus Christian Life Committee**. The Board is seeking another UCC person since the bylaws of the ministry call for two UCC delegates. Contact Marilyn at **512-392-0878** if you are willing to serve.



George Carruthers and Marilyn Gaddis had a marvelous time on their cruise along the Mississippi River in August

The **Tucker/Goodgame** family was in **Colorado** (mostly in **Cuchara**) much of the summer. **Pam** says it was just wonderful. The kids brought friends one trip and there is a picture at **Vista Point**. Pam climbed 3 mountains: **West Spanish Peak**, **Culebra** (this mountain is over 14k feet), and **Red Mountain**. The last two were on the same day.



7/16 Daryl Hale (Sav's friend) , Savanna, Pam, Harrison, and Harrison's friend Josh Lucas at Vista Point, Colorado



8/16 Pam Tucker with friends Danette Chimenti and Paula Deihl atop Culebra at 14K feet--1 of two mountains they climbed that day!

Mary Sinclair had a lovely week with her namesake **Mary Kurasi** (almost 16) and on **July 29th** put her on the plane to return from **Heidelberg, Ontario, Canada**, to **Manchester, NH**. The Kurasis, a refugee family from the Congo, were a part of our church family about 17 years ago until they moved to NH--see the photo in the Fellowship Hall. Tragically, **Judith**, the mother of the family, died of breast cancer several years later. Mary S. reports that Mary K. is a great kid, really sweet, funny, and smart. Both Marys kept busy for the week, go-karting with Mary S.'s grandsons and Mary K. very deftly beat them all. They went horseback riding again and Mary K. is very confident in the saddle. They did most of her school shopping which was a lot of fun with her dancing through the stores singing to the background music. Mary K. is very musical although Mary S. had to question her taste somewhat when she insisted on having her picture taken with Justin Bieber's star in his hometown of Stratford, very near Heidelberg. She's going into her sophomore year of high school and works part-time at the YMCA after school. Mary S. is so happy to say Mary K. is very focused on her future college career and thinks she'd like to become a teen counselor - a master's program! Her brother, **Israel** (19), has just started at a college in NH to become a firefighter and Mary S. and her husband **Richard Jackson** couldn't be more proud!



8/2016 Mary Sinclair with her namesake Mary Kurasi in Heidelberg, Ontario, Canada

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Return Service Requested

October Visitor Deadline—September 21, 2015

History Corner

by Pat and Mel Oakes

In our church's slightly over 100-year history, the sanctuary has only been air-conditioned since about the early 1970s. With the opening of the new education wing (which was built with AC), folks became increasingly uncomfortable with the heat in the sanctuary--even with the windows open. There was a long period of discussion with the Trustees about how it should be implemented. At some point it was decided to change the summer worship hours to 9:30 a.m. Since the service was over at 10:30 and coffee hour a bit later, a number of the families with young children decided that it would be great fun to change into bathing suits at church and go for a swim--and a picnic lunch, if so desired--at West Enfield pool at what is now near the west side of the intersection of MoPac and Enfield Road. That tradition lasted for some years until the church finally got air-conditioning installed. We went back to the 11 a.m. worship hour--resulting in no more after-church swim parties.

