

# THE VISITOR

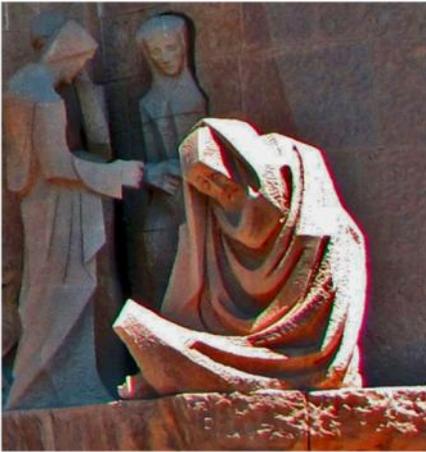
## The Congregational Church of Austin

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## United Church of Christ

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### Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt



**O**n September 22, the Los Angeles City Council declared that the situation facing their homeless population constituted a state of emergency. There are currently 26,000 homeless people

living in Los Angeles, with 17,700 of these homeless people going unsheltered every night.

The very next day, the mayor of Portland, Oregon, Charles Hales, declared that he too wanted the City of Portland to declare a homeless state of emergency. In the Portland metro area, 5,800 people are homeless, and 1,800 of these homeless people go without shelter every night.

On October 16, the Governor of Hawaii, David Ige, signed a proclamation declaring the homeless situation in Hawaii a state of emergency. Hawaii has 7,620 homeless people, the highest per capita of any state

On November 2, Seattle and King County, Washington, declared a state of emergency for its homeless population. The State of Washington estimates that 35,000 people in King County become homeless at some point each year. King County Executive Director, Down Constantine, justified the declaration by stating, “Emergency declarations are associated with natural disasters, but the persistent and growing phenomenon of homelessness –

here and nationwide – is a human-made crisis just as devastating to thousands as a flood or fire.”

When I read that 26,000 homeless people in LA constitutes *a* state of emergency for that city, what I see is not *one* state of emergency, but *26,000* states of emergency—26,000 men, women, and children personally experiencing a state of emergency in their lives, living on the street, on the sidewalk, in a box, on church steps, in a car, in a tent, under a bridge, or in a crowded shelter.

In Portland, Hawaii, Seattle and King County—not *a* state of emergency, but *tens of thousands*. According to the last count, there are over half a million homeless people in America—578,424 homeless men, women, and children, each one living in a personal state of emergency. In Texas, there 28,500 homeless men, women, and children, each one living in a personal state of emergency. In Austin, there are 1,877 homeless men, women, and children, each one living in a personal state of emergency. Right outside our church door—how many? Five, ten, sometimes twenty or thirty?

Every homeless person outside our door, every homeless person in America, faced some overwhelming crisis in their lives in which they ended up without a home in which to live, a state of emergency by any definition. Over half of all homeless people suffer from mental illness, a physical disability, and/or substance abuse. About 10% were the victims of physical abuse prior to being homeless. Many were born into poverty, and sank into even deeper poverty. Some were kicked out of their homes as young people because they’re gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered.

## This Year's Worship Gifts

by Nodie Murphy

Our church spends a lot of time, energy, and money responding to the homeless situation. We work closely with Lifeworks Street Outreach. We have our Front Porch Lunch Ministry in which we serve lunch to Lifeworks clients every Thursday afternoon. We offer our Fellowship Hall to Terry Cole's Street Ministry on Tuesday afternoons. Some of our members are volunteering at the Micah 6 Sunday drop-in at University Baptist Church. We open the Appel Room for Freeze Night Shelter in the winter. Some of us are active on the advocacy front, meeting with the police, city officials, and other service providers and advocates. Some are helping the homeless folks clean up the sidewalk and street on Sunday morning, and then helping them in additional and more personal ways.

I think many of us in this church view the homeless situation outside our door as a state of emergency. We haven't formally declared it as such, but the homelessness situation gets discussed in great depth at virtually every Board meeting. I spend more time on homelessness than any other "outreach" issue. It is without a doubt one of the most pressing issues we face as a church.

With winter approaching, and with the forecast predicting a cold and rainy winter, the state of emergency in which the homeless people in our neighborhood live will become even more dangerous. I'm convinced our shelter not only keeps people warm, dry, safe, and fed, but that it saves lives. I want to thank John Burlinson for being our lead shelter organizer this year, Jen Howicz for being our scheduler, John Goff for organizing the frozen meals, and every single one of you who volunteers to host and/or cook. As we do every Sunday, let's keep the homeless people and our homeless ministry team in our prayers.

What a lucky congregation we are, to be blessed with such gifted and interesting people willing to share their talents and insights with us. When the choir goes on "vacation" in the summer, the anthem is replaced by contributions from various members and friends of our church.

This summer's offerings began with Shannon Quisenberry singing a song backed up by her delightful daughters. Amy Harris arranged for a string quartet from the string camp she was co-sponsoring to play for us. (At the camp, they won the prize for the best chamber group.) Then Mel Oakes shared some of the history he has uncovered regarding the stained glass windows in our sanctuary. It seems that we have many links to classical and sacred music surrounding us as we worship.

July brought Loren Stell before us, to share some of the poetry he has written, inspired by his love of sailing and life's mysteries. Megan Goff brought samples of her artwork dating back quite a few years—an amazing feat considering her young age. Bill Beardall entertained us with a spirited version of a song, which he accompanied on the guitar.

Fran Briggs enjoys writing words to hymn tunes; this year she provided us with "Hear the Word of God." (Sara Ross helped prepare the printed music—another gift to us.) Fran's grandson, Giovanni Fracasso, read one of his prize-winning poems as well. Jonathan Geer surprised us with his love of origami, illustrating what other amazing things his talented piano-playing fingers can do (flying swans!). Annie Nash overwhelmed us with a performance art piece set to the music of "What Have They Done to My Song?" on our hymn-sing Sunday.

We had so many wonderful possibilities that they flowed over into the Fall. Beth Placek loves to express the spiritual through dance, so she inspired us through movement while the choir sang. Bill Mueller shared with us two introits he wrote over 25 years ago. (Jonathan prepared a practice CD for Beth and helped arrange and print the introits for Bill.) Chuck Jackson started us on a reflection regarding what "responsibility" is and how our attitude towards it shapes our lives.

A variety of talents, a willingness to share, a helping attitude, a group of seekers enriching our worship and our knowledge of one another and of the world—all these gifts were given to us, for which we are very thankful.

## Personals

by Pat Oakes



9/27/15 The Sunday School kick-off breakfast. Teacher Amy Rivera with John Dietz and Harrison Tucker enjoying Greek treats (Kevin Dietz in the background)

**Sunday, September 27**, was the annual kick-off breakfast for the **Sunday school**. **Amy Rivera**, our enthusiastic Sunday school teacher, working in conjunction with her students, put on a **Greek extravaganza** complete with togas and Greek games for parents and visitors. During the church service, our 3 youth representatives for the mission trip to **Dallas** this summer (**Alden Harris**, **Savanna Tucker**, and **Katie Lemley**) gave an excellent report complete with a slide show about their activities.

**Doyal Pinkard** had a bit of unexpected excitement in early October. Here is his report in his own words: "It all began a little after 2:00 AM on **Thursday, October 1st**, when I woke up feeling as if I had a bad case of indigestion. When my usual cure (drinking a Fresca) did not help, I got **Tommie** up. After giving me an aspirin, she drove me to the ER at **The Hospital at the Westlake Med-**

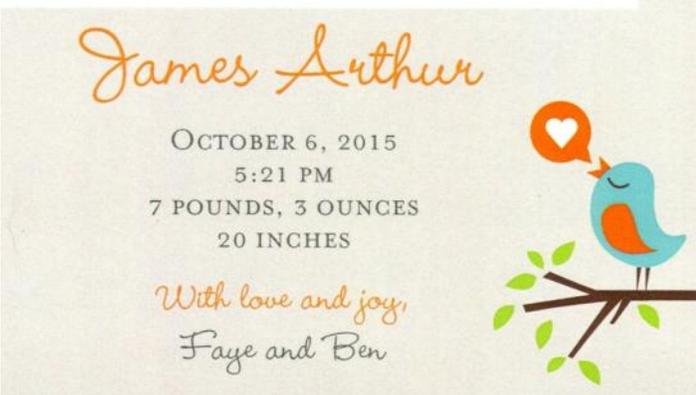
**ical Center**. My memory is a little hazy from this point on, as I was taken up to surgery and woke up in the ICU! The rest of Thursday and most of Friday I stayed in bed without moving much. I found out that the surgeon had to clean out two coronary arteries and put in stents. The next day (Saturday) I was moved into a regular room, and then discharged that afternoon. From that point on it has been a case of doing a little bit more every day and feeling a little bit better every day. It has really helped to think that there was a congregation of people who were supporting my recovery. Thank you all!!!" You might wonder why Tommie was driving Doyal to the hospital instead of calling an ambulance. In fact, she was scolded for that by one of the doctors. Tommie pointed out that they lived less than 5 minutes away and that an ambulance would have taken much longer. Both Tommie and Doyal are looking forward to a visit from son **David** in early November.



9/27/15 Our three youth representatives reporting on their mission trip to Dallas this summer  
**Alden Harris, Savanna Tucker, and Katie Lemley--Nodie Murphy in the choir**

**Pam Tucker** had a unilateral mastectomy on **October 6** and she was back in church the next Sunday--an amazing woman! The lymph node that was malignant in April showed no signs of cancer at the time of the surgery. This is very good news because it means that she will probably not require radiation!

**Nodie and Dennis Murphy** made a whirlwind trip to upstate **New York** to visit their son, **Ned (Ben)**, his wife **Faye**, and their newborn son, **James Arthur**. James was born on **October 6th** and was greatly admired by his grandparents a mere week later. Ned is scheduled to be deployed to **Afghanistan** soon, so the visit provided Nodie and Dennis with a wonderful opportunity to see him and his family before he leaves. Speaking of "leaves," the fall foliage along the highway from **Syracuse** to **Fort Drum** was beautiful--a lovely accompaniment to the "circle of life" theme of the trip.



**10/6/15 James Arthur Murphy's birth announcement**  
**Nodie and Dennis Murphy's newest grandson**

**Greg and Margaret Futch** recently returned from a trip to **Boston** where they enjoyed the beautiful colors of the changing leaves--and more importantly, enjoyed being with their beautiful grandkids, **Alex**, 4, and **Riley**, 2. Their son **Matt** and his wife **Cyndi** are "soldiering on", in their move to the Boston area. Matt's job is challenging, and they have two little ones to boot. Greg and Margaret were glad to be there helping them and enjoying the visit. Greg and



**10/15 Greg Futch with 4-year-old grandchild Alex in Gloucester, MA**

Margaret were glad to be there helping them and enjoying the visit. They visited **Salem** on a weekend, but it was overrun with crowds, so they just drove on to **Gloucester** where they had a nice lunch at the waterfront. Their hearts are with them in this expensive and intense new locale---traffic, winter weather, etc.---and Greg and Margaret continue to contemplate moving to New England next year. But only if Matt and family stay there, of course!!

Our former cellist **Robin Rosson**, son of **Barbara Burnham** and **Chester Rosson**, and **Julia Ross Rosson**, daughter of **Enid** and **Jim Ross**, are expecting a baby girl due in March. Big sister **Samantha** turned 4 in September. Julia is working on her thesis at **Texas State** and is also head of the **Special Education Dept.** at **Reagan HS** here in **Austin**. Robin continues to work at **HostGator**, a web hosting company. They are also busy renovating their house. They have finished a guest bath and are now working on the kitchen, which has hampered them because they are waiting to do the floors before putting in a new stove and countertops, as the old ones are gone. Barbara Burnham comments, "I don't know how they do it!"

Our fabulous pianist, **Jonathan Geer**, and his partner **Roberto Hernandez** had a great visit to **Mexico** in early September. They drove to **Monterrey**--a quick 6 hours away--to visit with Roberto's family. They then flew to tourist-filled **Playa del Carmen** on the **Yucatan Peninsula**. They visited **Isla Mujeres** and toured the area on a moped. They visited the **Mayan ruins** at **Cobá, Aké** (a relatively

## Heart of Texas Association News

October

by Liz Nash

It is with both sadness and gratitude that I share the news of the service celebrating **89 years** of ministry at Community United Church of Christ in San Antonio at 4 pm on Sunday, November 1st. Community voted earlier this year to end its ministry. They have sold their building and will be holding their final worship service there on November 22nd. The service on November 1st will lift up the ministry they have had over many years, and provide an opportunity for friends to join them. Community UC members continue to provide leadership in the South Central Conference and in the Heart of Texas Association in addition to their ministry at their church. Our prayers of thanksgiving and of compassion are with them at this time in their life together.

Friedens Church of Washington had a wonderful 125th anniversary celebration on October 11th, the culmination of many months of planning. A big group of members past and present came for morning worship led by Greg Felder with lovely special music; a lunch in the schoolhouse (which they own and have restored); a program of recognition for many guests and for their oldest members; and an afternoon worship service. Former ministers Jesse Campbell and Ron Trimmer were there, along with family members of other pastors. All of us hope Washington's vibrant ministry will thrive for many more years in its beautiful setting.

Hope United hosted a large group at their worship service celebrating their charter signing on Sunday, October 12th. Visitors -- including a group from Friedens Church of Washington, members, and friends joined together in the warm worship of this community that extends hospitality to all and reaches out in mission to many. Although we have considered Hope already to be part of our Association, they will be meeting with our Committee on Ministry soon to request official standing as a member church. Our spring Heart of Texas Association meeting is tentatively scheduled to meet at Hope to vote on membership and celebrate their ministry on April 3rd. What a joy it is to welcome two churches in one year!

We offer congratulations to Scott Martin, pastor of Faith UCC in New Braunfels, and to Weimar UCC. On Sunday, October 18th, Faith surprised Scott after worship with a celebration of his 10 years as their pastor. Scott has led in his work on the board of Back Bay Mission, in the Association, and in the Conference, as well as leading a growing church with significant mission outreach. Weimar celebrated this anniversary with former pastors Ralph Ludwig and Karen Nelson joining in the worship service with a special meal following. Weimar members have given great leaders to our Association and Conference, and they continue to be a central, thriving part of the community in Weimar.

Finally, I have two opportunities to share. The 2017 UCC Southern Regional Women's Conference will be hosted by South Central Conference, and people willing to work to plan it are needed. This gathering will build on the "Celebrate the Lord of the Dance" gathering in Alabama this year. Contact Jasmine Quinerly (Houston Association Minister) or Charlotte Albert at [quinerly@sbcglobal.net](mailto:quinerly@sbcglobal.net) or [charlotte@spcucc.org](mailto:charlotte@spcucc.org) to be part of this effort. Also, I will be going again to Alegría, El Salvador the last week of January with a UCC group from Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Iowa, and Texas. We work, visit, learn, and worship with the people there in their cooperative effort to build a full and good life. If you are interested in joining us, contact me at [lizknash@gmail.com](mailto:lizknash@gmail.com) or 512-799-2782.

Blessings in Christ

Liz Nash

Heart of Texas Association Minister

newly discovered ruin and not filled with tourists) and **Chichen Itza** (quite well-explored--and filled with tourists). They were surprised to learn that many of the sites are still being excavated. Jonathan came home from the trip with several goals--to get himself a moped--and more importantly--to become fluent in Spanish. Jonathan was delighted that Roberto was there to ask questions and to translate for him.



9/15 Jonathan Geer with Roberto Hernandez in Aké in Mexico.

They had the whole place to themselves.

Our marvelous cellist **Colin Ferguson** and his fiancée **Eli** (pronounced Ellie) were married on **Saturday, September 5**, in a lovely house wedding in **Bertram**, where they live. Colin's family members and close friends of the couple were in attendance. Eli is from **Spain** and her family could not come, so a close neighbor walked her down the aisle (the driveway). Colin's mother cooked lasagna for 65 folks, **Amy Harris** from our trio played the violin with the other string players, and **Pastor Tom** officiated. The day after the wedding was spent cleaning the house and packing for their honeymoon trip to **Europe**. They spent 2 days in **London** walking along the **Thames** and looking at mummies in the **British Museum**. From there they went to meet Eli's family in **Barcelona**. They had a lovely reception for them at a restaurant where Colin met Eli's parents, her friends and 4 sisters. Colin's uncle (who works in Paris) and his family joined in the festivities as well. From Barcelona they continued on to **Rome** for a brief day and a half. Colin says, "We conquered it all!! My feet are still hurting from walking non-stop!! It was an amazing adventure of a lifetime and definite reassurance that I married the right girl." Upon their return, the Deacons hosted a wel-



9/5/15 Meet the bride and groom--Eli (Mateos) and Colin Ferguson with Pastor Tom VandeStadt officiating

come back reception for the newlyweds during coffee hour on **Sunday, October 4th**.

**John Goff** spent 3.5 weeks in **Israel**, both for work and pleasure. The work involved a marine geophysical survey offshore of **Caesarea**, the grand port that **Herod** built south of **Haifa** and north of **Jaffa**. The port was a huge concrete structure that protruded out into the ocean, and was a technological marvel of its time. However, it eventually fell into disuse and ruin following the impact of two tsunamis in the centuries that followed, and the survey was intended to map the coarse sedimentary deposits offshore that were formed by the tsunamis. They were working in collaboration with the **Israeli Antiquities Authority**. During their spare time, they visited the beautiful cities of Haifa and **Acre**, the old Crusader fort and port. After their survey work was done, they traveled around the country, first going to the **Sea of Galilee**, where John was unable to walk on the water but did go swimming. They then did some wine tasting in the Galilean highlands and **Golan Heights**. One winery was just a stone's throw from Lebanon, were they could see **Israel Defense Forces** and **Hezbollah** outpost soldiers staring at each other from ~200 m apart. The other was near the Syrian border, and they were able to see nearly to **Damascus** from the top of an extinct volcano. Ruined buildings they could see in the near distance were remnants of the 1974 war between Syria and Israel, and left there as a memorial. They then went to the **Dead Sea**, where they could nearly walk on water, and a visit to **Masada**, which still bears signs of the Roman assault on the Jewish rebels in 67 A.D. Finally, they spent two days in **Jerusalem** (it hadn't changed since John's last trip there 30 years ago).

**Stephen Russell** was raised in our church and is delighted to be back in Austin and back at the church. He is now the **Priscilla Pond Flawn Professor in Child Development** in the school of **Human Development and Family Sciences** at UT. He is particularly interested in adolescent development, with an emphasis on adolescent sexuality, LGBT youth, and parent-adolescent relationships. He is committed to creating social change leading to healthy adolescent development. In a wonderful coincidence, he has hired highly qualified **Heather Cole** (a lawyer with a master's in social work) as a part-time research assistant, who also grew up in this church. Heather has lived in **Canada** for many years and is back in town with her husband and 3-year-old daughter **Alex**. During the interview process, it took them a while to figure out that they knew each other--after all, it had only been 30 years since they had seen each other! When the realization came to them, they were laughing and laughing. There were several other folks sitting in on the interview, one of whom asked Heather how well she had known Stephen. With her quick smile, she replied, "Let me put it this way--when Stephen played Joseph in the church Christmas pageant, I was Mary!"

**Marilyn Gaddis** and **George Carruthers** recently returned from a **Road Scholar Program**, "**Seattle to the San Juan Islands**" (on their "bucket list"). After a day trip around **Seattle** that included the cultural history museum on the shores of **Lake Union**, they boarded the *Wilderness Adventurer*. They then sailed through the **Hiram Chittenden Locks** into **Puget Sound** and the **Hood Canal**. The next morning included a short hike through a portion of the lush **Olympic Park**. At "**Happy Hour**," Marilyn had her fill of "home-grown" oysters furnished by a local family. Docking at **Port Townsend**, they climbed the "famous" steps to see the historic homes and fire-bell. On to **Lopez Island** for a "skiff" tour around the island and a visit to **Friday Harbor** and the **Whale Museum**. Passing **Speiden Island**, some of the resident exotic animals were viewed. They climbed up **Mt. Constitution** on **Orcas Island** to view **Mt. Baker**, the Washington coastline, and some Canadian Islands. On to **Sucia Island**, a skiff tour to see sea lions and then a hike through **Sucia Park** and a visit to an empty school built by the community. Presently, there are no school age children on the island. Instead of heading back to Seattle through **Deception Pass** where the weather condi-

tions were poor, the captain deviated to **Stuart Island**. There the bay was filled with orcas and hump-back whales too numerous to count! That evening the rain came down in buckets, the first and only bad weather- the days were unseasonably warm and sunny. The meals on the ship were fabulous and the instructors were well versed on marine life. On the journey back to **San Marcos**, the travelers visited friends and relatives in **Olympia, WA; Eugene, OR** (98 year old cousin); **Chico, CA; Walnut Creek, CA** (the new Bay Area shopping "mecca"); and **Fresno, CA**. At the **Los Angeles Union Station**, they were pleasantly surprised to find a food court and a new Lounge for first class passengers.

**Mel** and **Pat Oakes** enjoyed a quick visit (2 days each way by car and 2 days there) to **Vicksburg, MS**, for Mel's 61st high school reunion and the all-county reunion the next day. There were only 23 students in Mel's graduating class and 8 of them (about 20 at the party altogether) were at the party on **Friday, October 16th**. The all-county reunion is for graduates from the 3 high schools in the county which were closed in 1965 and a new, integrated consolidated high school was opened. There were about 250 folks at that one (anyone who graduated from the 3 high schools 1965 or earlier--plus spouses)--a good time reconnecting with old friends and family, especially Mel's two brothers and their wives.

### Church Leadership

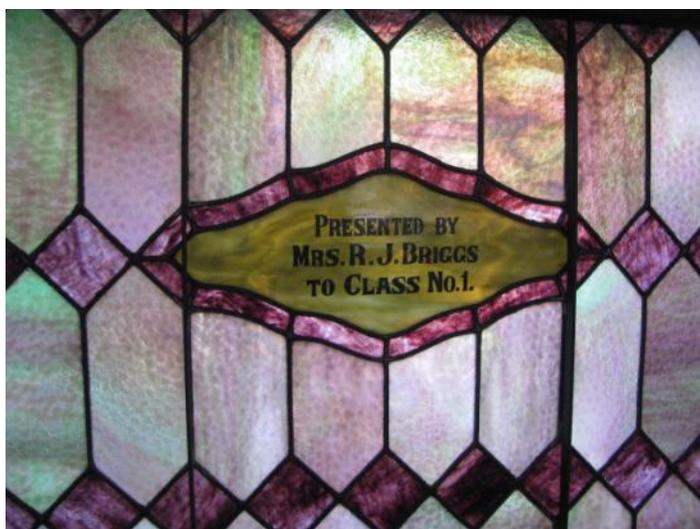
Trustee Co-Chairs	Don Brown & Bill Campbell
Deacons Chair	Janet Parsons
Outreach Team	Reuel Nash & John Goff
Moderator Co-Chairs	Barbara Burnham & Bill Beardall
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Pam Tucker
Christian Education	Rachel Dietz
Coordinators	John Burlinson
Clerk	Betty Bodman
Historians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

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Return Service Requested

## December Visitor Deadline—November 19, 2015

History Corner  
by Pat and Mel Oakes



9/21/14 Medallion on the pulpit side--Presented by Mrs. R.J. Briggs to Class No. 1. She was the wife of the 1st minister of the church



Tombstone for Dr. Ritchie J. Briggs (1858-1923--first pastor of our church) and his wife Alice Burford Briggs (1859-1938), Oakwood cemetery in Austin

**Mrs. R.J. Briggs** (1859-1938) was the wife of the first pastor of the church. She was born **Alice Rebecca Burford** in **Mobile, AL**, in 1859. Alice came from an established family. The Burford family resided in Camden, Wilcox County, Alabama, from 1830 to the turn of the last century. Alice's parents, the Burfords, had established a cotton farm outside Camden, referred to as Burford's Landing, where they raised eleven children. At the time of her marriage to **Rev. Briggs**, Alice was the widow of **Clement Marshall Dumas**, a postmaster. Clement and Alice (she was 17) were married October 12, 1876. Clement, who was born August 30, 1847, in Anson County, NC, had died in Waukesha, Wisconsin, on June 18, 1879. They had no children. Alice returned home to Alabama to live with her parents. She met Rev. Briggs while

he was the pastor of **First United Methodist Church in Florence, AL**. They were married when she was 21 (Rev. Briggs was 22) in Mobile, AL, on December 13, 1880. Because of the window at the church, we know that she served as a Sunday school teacher. They had one son, **George Waverly Briggs** (1883-1957), who was a reporter at several Texas newspapers. Because of his research as a newspaperman, he became an expert on Texas penitentiaries, housing, and banking, and served in several capacities in Texas government. All 3 are buried at **Oakwood Cemetery in Austin**--16th and Navasota within sight of the Capitol and just off of I-35. Sadly, we have no picture of her.