

# THE VISITOR

November 2017

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

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**Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt**



**W**hen the band, The Sex Pistols, broke up in the late '70s, their singer, John Lydon, immediately formed a new band called PiL, Public Image Limited. One of PiL's more famous songs was, *This is Not a Love Song*, in which Lydon, with his infamous voice, repeatedly sang the line, "This is not a love song." I think we need a line like that to introduce the Parable of the Ten Maidens. This is not a sharing story.

I've heard many people complain about this parable over the years. "I don't like it," they say, "the five maidens were selfish. They should've shared their oil. Jesus teaches us to share." Jesus certainly does teach us to share. But not in the Parable of the Ten Maidens.

This isn't a parable about sharing.

Then what is it about? Many say this parable is about the difficulty of waiting for Christ's return. Folks in the early church believed the resurrected Christ would return to earth in the "Second Coming." But when would that be? Wasn't it supposed to have happened already? Why the delay? It's hard to keep waiting for someone with eager anticipation when *any minute now* turns into decades. Nagging doubts creep in, you can't help but question, is he ever coming back?

So there's the whole issue of waiting. But this parable addresses more than mere waiting. It's how you wait. You have to make sure you're prepared. You have to make sure you have all the oil you need, so that when Christ does arrive, you're personally present and able to respond to him. Prepared, present, responsive. This parable isn't just about waiting, it's about personal responsibility.

Personal responsibility. Personal. Response. Ability. The ability of a person to respond. When it comes to my own personal response ability, no one else can take my place. No one else can be Tom VandeStadt for me. Only I can be Tom VandeStadt, and only I can be ready, willing and able as Tom VandeStadt. No one else on earth can do that for me. I can't borrow someone else's oil. Someone else's mojo. Someone else's life. No one else can show up for my life. I have my unique set of gifts, my unique way of being a person, and it's only as that unique me that I'm able to personally respond when the time comes.

When the time comes for what? In the parable, it's when Christ comes again. Each one of us must be personally able to respond when Christ comes again. Does that mean we have to believe in "The Second Coming of Christ?" Do we have to believe that the risen Christ will one day come back to earth in that apocalyptic manner that some parts of the New Testament describe? In the way the earliest Christians believed the

risen Christ would return to vanquish evil and establish the kingdom of God?

Some Christians say, “Yes, it does mean we have to believe in that traditional Second Coming of Christ scenario.” They believe it and they’re still waiting for it to happen. Other Christians say, “No, it doesn’t mean we have to believe in that traditional Second Coming of Christ scenario.” I count myself among those who say, no.

Nevertheless, I do believe that I must be personally able to respond to Christ when Christ comes again. I just don’t believe I have to wait for Christ to come again on clouds of glory sometime in the future. I believe Christ is already here on earth. I believe I’ve already encountered Christ again and again and again, and that I’ll continue to encounter Christ again and again and again. And every time Christ comes again, my call, as one of his disciples, is to personally respond to him.

Here’s where another gospel story is instructive. Christ said, whenever you encounter someone who’s hungry or thirsty, you encounter me. Whenever you encounter someone who needs the most basic things one needs to live, or someone who’s sick, or locked up in a prison, or in a strange place without friends or support, you encounter me.

This list isn’t exhaustive, but I think we can see what Christ meant. Whenever we encounter someone who’s suffering and in need, someone our world deems lowly and undeserving and pushes to the back of the line or the bottom of the barrel, we encounter Christ. And when we personally respond to that someone, we personally respond to Christ. And when we don’t, we don’t.

Christ is already here. And Christ is all over the place. I don’t have to wait. I just have to open the eyes of my heart. And be ready, willing and able. Personally able to respond. No one else can respond for me *as me*. No one else can respond for you *as you*. The Parable of the Ten Maidens isn’t about sharing. It’s about personal response ability. Your personal response may be to share. But only you can share what is yours to share. And only you can share who you are.

Tom.

### Church Leadership

Trustee Chair	Don Brown
Deacons Chair	Betty Bodman
Outreach Team	Whit Bodman
Moderator	John Goff
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Pam Tucker
Christian Education	Lynne Lemley
Youth Sunday School	
Coordinator	John Burlinson
Clerk	Jaime Hadley
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Webmistresses:	Shannon Quisenberry, Sara Ross
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

**Personals**  
by Pat Oakes

**T**he church youth group brought a festive touch to coffee hour on the Sunday before Halloween when they held a carved pumpkin raffle. The congregation purchased more than two hundred dollars worth of tickets (\$1/ticket) with 5 lucky winners in the drawing. **Alden Harris** with the help of his dad John and his brother **William** carved two pumpkins and **Tess Howicz, Savanna** and **Harrison Tucker**, also with some parental help, carved the other three. The amazing **Pam Tucker** was there with her two even though she had had her knee replaced the prior Monday. Since Pam was not able to drive, Savanna explained that she only has her learner's driving permit and cannot drive without an adult in the car, so the intrepid Pam came along with Savanna and Harrison to be sure their pumpkins were delivered. With the funds they raised, the youth group plans to help provide Christmas for some needy children.



**10/29/17 Savanna Tucker, Harrison Tucker, and Alden Harris, along with Tess Howicz (not pictured) created 5 amazing pumpkins (including Donald Trumpkin between Harrison and Alden) for a raffle to raise funds for Christmas for needy children.**

Also on Sunday, the 29th of October, **Bill Beardall** from the Equal Justice Center and **Edgar Navarrete**, who is a Dreamer and works with Bill, held a Citizens Workshop after coffee hour to teach

the 20 or so congregants who stayed about the intricacies of the Dreamers executive order recently rescinded and DACA. Bill made the initial presentation followed by Edgar telling us his story and how he got to the U.S. Edgar is 23 and arrived in the U.S. when he was 3, so he has been here most of his life. There was a lively exchange of ideas, questions, and good discussion and we all left feeling enlightened.



**10/29/17 Bill Beardall and Edgar Navarrete, a Dreamer who also works at the Equal Justice Center with Bill, presented a workshop after church on the Dreamers and DACA.**

The Sunday school kick-off on Sept. 8 had a New Orleans taste and flair which delighted young and older alike. Organized by Sunday school teacher **Amy Kent**, the event featured fortune telling, palm reading, a fishing pond and other games, New Orleans jazz provided by cellist **Tony Rogers** and violist **Amy Harris** along with kazoo enthusiasts plus delicious treats—doughnuts, even grits!! Parents and other adults are encouraged to come and enjoy the meet and greet and this year there was an excellent turnout.

(See upcoming photos p. 5.)

## Heart of Texas Association News

November

by Liz Nash

**A**S many of you know, on Sunday, September 24th, our friend and brother in Christ, Greg Felder, passed away in his home. Greg's death was sudden, due to a cerebral hemorrhage. The people of Friedens Church of Washington arrived at church to the sad discovery that morning. They are grieving the loss of a faithful, engaged, and loving pastor. Greg's parents and the rest of his family are grieving this great loss of a very beloved son and family member. The people of St. John's UCC in Burton are grieving the loss of a friend and former Associate Minister they had known for years. And those of us who knew him are grieving the loss of a kind and caring friend and colleague. We celebrated his life and faith in God in Christ, with whom he now lives in God's abundant love, at services both at Friedens Washington and at St. John's on Saturday, September 30th. Many of us will continue to miss him, knowing his life has enriched ours for many years.

On Sunday, October 1st, we had a joyous event in the life of one of our churches. Bethany Congregational UCC in San Antonio celebrated former pastor, Gerry Metzger, as their pastor emeritus. The church had voted to honor Gerry in this way last January after he retired, and then decided the time to celebrate and honor Gerry would come a few months later in their interim period. Many people were part of the service: Tom Robison, Bethany's interim pastor, welcomed us; I preached; several people spoke to share their memories and their gratitude; there was special music; and Gerry led communion. It was a great day to celebrate a pastor who gave his time and work in so many ways to Bethany, to Redeemer UCC where he served earlier, to the community, to the South Texas Association, to Back Bay Mission, and to the South Central Conference. We are grateful for Gerry and his generous ministry.

You are all invited to join together in the **Fall Association Meeting of the Heart of Texas Association**, coming up very soon on **Saturday, November 4th at Church of the Savior**, 3402 Little Elm Trail in Cedar Park (near the intersection of FM 620 and US 183). **Registration is at 9:30 am, the meeting and worship begins at 10 am, and we will end with lunch.** Major items on the agenda include the Ecclesiastical Council of Andrew Young of Trinity Church of Austin, the work of our scholarship committee to set up a scholarship fund in memory of Greg Felder, and the request of St. Paul UCC Corpus Christi to join the Heart of Texas Association. Our former South Texas Association churches know St. Paul as a longtime member church. At the time of the merger to form the Heart of Texas Association, St. Paul decided to join the Houston Association in an effort to find the closest community of churches to them as we dealt with the longer distances in the merged Association. They have found it difficult to make it to Houston Association meetings due to meeting times, and have realized that our meeting location rotation and times will make it easier for them to drive the long distances to be able to be connected. Our merged Association is still a work in progress, and we look forward to welcoming our brothers and sisters in Christ from St. Paul to this meeting to consider their request. The cost of lunch for the meeting is \$5 -- no RSVP needed. Just come!

Blessings in Christ,  
Liz Nash, Heart of Texas Association Minister

## Personals (continued)

by Pat Oakes

11/8/17 Folks visiting during the New Orleans-themed Sunday School Kickoff:

Ena and Shaela Rutherford, Dennis Murphy, Becky Nash, Amy Harris and her violin, Tony Rogers and his cello, Jonathan Geer talking to Roberto Hernandez, Naomi and Bryan Rutherford.



10/8/17 Francesca Dietz watching William Harris tell Joy Penticuff's fortune; Rachel Dietz talking with teacher Amy Kent, Alden Harris (palm reader) and his mom Warinda.



**Cathy Hubbs** celebrated her 95th birthday on October 7 and in honor of that, we had two birthday parties for her! The first celebration was after church on Sunday, the 8th, during coffee hour. Pat Oakes made a carrot cake and Nodie led us all in a great song which she wrote for Cathy's 90th birthday, only having to change one word—90 to 95. The

following week there was another grand celebration when her two daughters, **Laura Hubbs-Tait**, in from Oklahoma, and **Ann Hubbs**, in from West Virginia, and Laura's daughter **Aidan** and her husband **Felipe Vasconcellos** (whom Aidan met while working in Brazil) in from San Francisco. Aidan is doing her residency in pediatric anesthesiology at Stanford and could not get off the previous week, so the celebration was spread over two weekends. Laura brought two cakes from Upper Crust Bakery which were enjoyed by all.



10/15/17 Grandson-in-law, Felipe Vasconcellos, Laura Hubbs-Tait, 95-year-old Cathy Hubbs celebrating her birthday with family at church, Ann Hubbs, and granddaughter Aidan Tait. They are standing by the window dedicated to Clark and Cathy last year.

**Amy Harris**, soprano, delighted a group of music lovers, including a number of church members, on Sunday afternoon, October 14 with a fabulous recital. Amy (who is also our church violinist and sings in the choir), a student of **Daniel Arredondo**, was accompanied by **Jonathan Geer**. What is really amazing is that she was not fulfilling any degree requirements but did it just for the fun of it—including memorizing all of the words to the music (in Latin, German, Italian, and English). The songs included works by Mozart, Bach, Puccini, Schubert, and Ernest Charles.

10/15/17 Amy Harris, soprano, after her fabulous recital with her teacher Daniel Arredondo, (I), and accompanist Jonathan Geer.



10/26/17 Joy Penticuff at the horse barn astride her beautiful horse Armani.



Joy Penticuff competed in a hunter/jumper horse show in San Antonio Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 14-15, with her horse “Armani”, AKA “Our Money”, as he is called by Joy’s husband Michael. This was Joy and Armani’s first horse show to compete in together, although both Joy and Armani have competed in shows before. Joy began competing in Hunter shows with her horse “Tabuk” in 1976, then took a break while tending to daughter Rachel, then back into horse shows in the mid-1990s through the present. Joy has had several horses through the years and Michael has endured her “horse addiction” with good grace, although he has quit attending the shows. He says horse shows for him are “hours of sheer boredom” (waiting for Joy’s turn in the competition) “interspersed with moments of sheer terror” (fearing that Joy’ll have a dreadful accident during the competition). Joy was very happy with how the show went. Fourteen horses were competing in her classes, with each rider and horse jumping a course of seven jumps. The competition is based on form, not on speed. In their three classes on Saturday, Joy and Armani won two 6th place ribbons and one 7th place ribbon. On Sunday, they won 2nd place ribbons in each of their two classes. It was lot of fun!

10/2017 Debby Kohrt's nursing cohort on their Smiles International mission to Cabo San Lucas —Debby is third from the right in the middle rows— notice how big their smiles are!



Debby Kohrt is pleased to share that her Smiles International group had another successful week-long mission from October 21-28 in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. She feels it is such an honor to be with this group (the staff comes from Michigan, California, and Texas)—very hard work, but so rewarding 6 in that it has such an impact on the lives of the

children and their families! They did 60 procedures on 20 children over the week. In addition to working on new patients, they also provide follow-up care for children who have had surgery on previous visits. There are several Smiles organizations and the web site for Debby's group is <http://www.smilesinternationalfoundation.org/home0.aspx>

**Dennis and Nodie Murphy** have made several trips in recent months, all related to family visits. First they went to Kansas to see Nodie's **Uncle Ash**, who is 99 years old, and his wife, **Zelda**, 96, plus another aunt and some cousins. Then in July they went to Washington, D.C. where Nodie's siblings were gathering to attend her sister **Pam's** play about Israeli soldiers speaking out about the Occupation policies they enforce. In September the Murphys visited Nodie's sister **Missy** and her husband **Sean** in Highlands Ranch, near Denver. (Nodie hadn't visited Denver since she was 5 years old!) Then for their grandson's second birthday celebration, they joined their son **Ned** and his wife **Faye** and her family in the Twin Cities area. Of course, 2-yr.old **James** was adorable, particularly when he used sign language to say "thank you" for his birthday presents! He does



**10/14/17 James Arthur Murphy, ensconced as king, celebrating his second birthday.**

**George Hetrick** had a great trip with Adventure Cycling in September. He flew in to Boston and

visited with friends in the area and then drove to Plymouth with all his gear including his bike. The 8 day bike/camping trip titled "A Cape Cod Pilgrimage" went from Plymouth to Westport, Sagamore, they took the ferry to and from Martha's Vineyard, then on to Brewster and finishing in Provincetown—riding a



**9/8/17 George Hetrick and two others getting ready to start their 8 day Cape Cod bicycling adventure.**

total of 234 miles over 8 days. George, an avid lighthouse aficionado, saw many lighthouses and also loaded up on lobster rolls and fried clams. He was particularly pleased that there was no rain and the temperatures were very pleasant.

**Paula Briggs Fracasso** had an unwanted adventure over Labor Day weekend. Paula was out at the senior Briggs' lake home and told her dad **Rambie** that she had a terrible headache. Her symptoms mimicked a classic migraine. Rambie advised her that if it wasn't gone in a day or two to get to her doctor. She did what dad said and the doctor ordered an immediate MRI. Paula drove home and got a call from her doctor who told her he was sending an ambulance to take her to the hospital. The doctor had found that she had a carotid artery dissection (a tear in the artery—and in Pauls's case, very near the brain and inoperable). A large blood clot had formed where the tear was. She was put on blood thinners and spent several days in the hospital. Now almost 2 months later, Paula is doing fine. She had a rough couple of weeks adjusting to her new reality—nothing more strenuous than walking for the next year. She was

very lucky and the doctors believe that the tear will repair itself and the blood clot will dissolve. Paula is back at work—working mostly from home as an executive coach including one day a week at the Austin Film Society. Her headache is gone, she can drive, and she is doing well. Giovanni and Stella have been staying with their dad, **Michael Fracasso**, at his place with frequent visits to see their mom.

On Oct. 23rd, our church pianist **Jonathan Geer** was surprised, as he says, "totally out of the blue when my little score for The Franz Kafka Videogame got nominated for 'Best Original Song/Score -Mobile Video Game' by the Hollywood Music in Media (HMMA)!" The awards ceremony will be in Los Angeles on Thursday, Nov. 16, 2017. The Franz Kafka Videogame is a point-and-click puzzle/adventure game inspired by the writings of Franz Kafka. You can listen to the music at <https://jonathangeer.bandcamp.com/album/the-franz-kafka-videogame-ost>. We are hoping for a win, Jonathan!

**Mel and Pat Oakes** enjoyed a quick trip (1 1/2 days drive to and from and a day and a half there) to Mel's hometown of Vicksburg, MS, over a long weekend the 19th-23rd of October. On their way out of town they stopped by and had a lovely visit with **Nancy Brown** at the nursing home where she lives in Buckner Villas in northeast Austin. She is doing fine and is so well cared for and loved by her many friends and her caregiver **Isabelle Milhouse**. It was fun for Mel and Pat to drive the familiar route to Vicksburg after an absence of two years. They enjoyed Mel's school reunion, saw both of his brothers

and their wives, lots of old friends, and a nephew and his family.

**Gail Christeson** spent the first 2 weeks of October in London on business, collaborating with colleagues at Imperial College. She found an affordable apartment on a side street just north of Hyde Park and had a nice walk 20-minute walk through the park to get to Imperial College. During her free time she went to 3 shows-- "School of Rock" (a musical based on the movie), "Motown" (a musical chronicling the origins of Motown records), and "Cirque Eloize" (hard to describe, but it involved a lot of acrobatics and music).



**Oct. 2017: Gail's apartment was in one of the buildings on the left of this photo.**

## **November Visitor Deadline—Oct. 29, 2017**

**History Corner**  
by Pat and Mel Oakes

**Happy Thanksgiving to one and all!**

**I**n the 1990s, we had several Thanksgiving feasts on the Sunday before Thanksgiving in what is now called the Appel Room. The picture below is from twenty-five years ago. The table was set and decorated, turkey and all the fixings were served, and folks had a wonderful time—and, of course, many folks helped with the setup, cooking, and cleanup. The idea at the time was to start a tradition of folks coming to church on Thanksgiving Sunday dressed as the early Pilgrims and native Americans.

Many of our newer members may have never been downstairs to see the space which is now used by Street Youth Ministries and over the years has hosted groups such as The Raft (a shelter for homeless youth many years ago), People’s Community Clinic (which started in our basement), Lifeworks, etc. The room is called the **Appel Room** in honor of **Jean and Vic Appel**.

The **Ashton** family was very active in the church for many years as was her dad **Dick Swallow** (who is now retired from the UT Architecture School) who designed our Sunday School wing. The Ashton kids are all grown up now! **Terri Ocean** died several years ago as did **Winnie Schild**.

Pat and Mel Oakes are still extant!!

Pat and Mel Oakes



Thanksgiving Sunday, Nov. 22nd, 1992—Pilgrims and native Americans all--I-r Susan Ashton, Terri Ocean, Pat and a very reluctant Mel Oakes, Winnie Schild, David Ashton with Katherine, ?(If anyone remembers her name, please let me know), a visitor from Thailand Nitraporn ?, and Sarah, Jennie, and Jonathan Ashton