

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt



In the resurrection story in John's Gospel, Mary Magdalene encounters a man outside the tomb, a man she believes to be the gardener. A gardener implies a garden. When

the "gardener" begins speaking to Mary, she realizes the gardener is really Christ risen from the dead. In other words, Mary is speaking to the risen Christ in the garden.

In the Bible, the "garden" carries powerful symbolic weight, given the prominence of the Garden of Eden in the Genesis creation story, and in particular, the story of Adam and Eve. In a sense, Adam, given responsibility for tending God's creation, is the very first gardener. And yet, as the Genesis story unfolds, Adam and Eve become responsible for the downfall of humanity, and for the descent of creation into the dysfunctional mess of suffering it has become. Adam and Eve are exiled from the garden, and with them all subsequent generations.

Some interpreters of John's Gospel take Mary's encounter with the risen Christ in the garden as symbolism conveying that the risen Christ is the Lord of a new creation. Indeed, the prologue to John's Gospel, which sets the tone for the gospel, begins with a Christ-centered creation poem. The risen Christ in the garden, symbolizing a new or a restored creation, reinforces a theme that runs throughout John's Gospel: Christ restores creation to God, because all of creation was created through Christ in the first place. Those who trust Christ and follow the way of Christ are part of the new creation. In John's language, they're saved.

This new creation is all well and good, but as John's Gospel progresses beyond the initial account of Mary's encounter with the risen Christ in the garden, we quickly discover that the old creation, the one that's a dysfunctional mess, the one that's in exile from the garden, is still very present. In fact, immediately after the resurrection story, we find the disciples cowering in a room, hiding behind a locked door, scared to death for their lives, fearing their hands and feet may be the next ones nailed to a cross. They've heard that Christ has been resurrected. But nothing's really changed. The Romans still occupy Judea. Pontius Pilate is still governor. The High Priest still controls the Temple. Crosses still wait for more people to crucify. The world hasn't changed a bit.

So what gives? Has the world been transformed, or hasn't it? Are we back in the garden, or still exiled from it? Or more specifically, what difference does Christ's resurrection really make if the world in which we live is still the same old dysfunctional mess?

First off, it's helpful to remember that in John's Gospel, Jesus never says the whole world will be suddenly transformed overnight. In fact, just the opposite. He warns his disciples that it won't be. He warns them of the difficulties they'll face and the persecution they'll suffer. He prays for them, that they may have faith, that they may love one another, that they may all be one, so as to have the strength to withstand life in a world that will continue to be a dysfunctional mess.

On the other hand, he promised them that they could be saved, they could live in holy union with God and one another, they could experience a fullness of joy and life abundant, if they trusted him completely, loved one another as he loved them, and served one another as he served them.

If they did this, they would experience God's *shalom* in their lives, the *shalom* God intended for all creation. And then, like flowers blooming on a branch, like plump fruit hanging off a vine, their community would bloom like a garden, teeming with new life in the very midst of a world still in exile from the garden. Their community would be the *shalom* of God, the joy of abundant life, right smack-dab in the middle of the dysfunctional mess.

Believe we encounter the resurrected Christ whenever we ourselves place our full trust in him, when we love as he loved, and when we serve as humbly as he served. When faith in Christ, love for Christ, and the humility of Christ all come together within our community, the presence and power of Christ becomes manifest within us and through us. Christ lives in us and through us. And we bloom with holy fruit. We blossom with that spirit that heals, reconciles, and liberates life. We blossom with the joy Christ promised.

For me, that's what it means to encounter Christ in the garden. Through our faith, love, and humble service, the garden springs up within us, through us, and around us. The garden isn't just some mythical place in the past, or some escapist fantasy, or a paradise to which people will be restored in the distant future. The garden can spring up within us, through us, and around us right now. In this place. On the corner of San Antonio and 23rd, and wherever two or more are gathered together in his name. So let us pray for faith in Christ, the love of Christ, the humility to serve the least of our sisters and brothers, that we may be a life-blooming, life-sustaining garden in the very midst of the dysfunctional world in which we live.

A Joyful Theology
Adult Education Sessions
Begin on April 19th

Most of you know our own **Rev. Dr. Van Herd**, our shared **Minister of Adult Education**, whom we are sharing with UCC and UBC. Van will be returning to lead a series of classes here at CCA beginning **Sunday, April 19th at 12:30 p.m.** In addition to having pastored UCC churches, Van is now an **Associate Research Scientist and Reactor Operator in Nuclear Engineering at The University of Texas at Austin**, and also is a Lecturer in Mathematics, as well as in History of Science.

Plan now to be a part of these special sessions exploring the relationships among science, technology, and the Christian faith, using **Sara Maitland's** transformational book, *A Joyful Theology: Creation, Commitment and an Awesome God*. (The book is now available at the **UT Co-op**.) Van has already begun this series with our ecumenical partner, **University Christian Church**, and the study has been received there with great enthusiasm by the adult classes that have been marked by high attendance and great interest.

The author, **Sara Maitland**, is the spouse of a **Church of England** vicar and is rooted in a scientific family. She herself is an artist, poet, and novelist, who writes with

imagination, creativity, and conviction her vision of the awe-inspiring interconnectivity of science and theology. Those interested may visit her website: http://www.saramaitland.com/about_me.html/.

Make plans now to join us for this transformational study!

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
Historian	Pat & Mel Oakes
Web mistress	Sara Ross
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

Personals by Pat Oakes

Marie Scheel's memorial service was on Saturday afternoon, March 7th, at the church. Because Marie had no family here, her church family took care of arrangements for the service. **Nodie** organized the choir and the musicians. She used music that Marie had loved and used—that still had her instructions on the pages. While our usual musicians were unavailable, **Dr. Maimy Fong** played the piano and our own **Katie Lemley** played the cello, providing beautiful music. Marie would have been so proud of her. The Deacons hosted a time of fellowship and remembrance after the service. **Mel and Pat Oakes** created a slide show about Marie and Weldon for folks to enjoy in the fellowship hall. Marie was a long-time member of the Wednesday Morning Music Club and a good number of her friends were in attendance. Her niece **Lois Saviniemi Sefcovic** represented Marie's family who are still in Michigan. Lois send her love and gratitude to all who knew and loved Marie all these years and who helped with the service. Marie lived a good long life, staying in her own home (with some good help) until the very end.



Excited Zooley Parkhill celebrated her 3rd birthday at church. The baby doll was one of her gifts.



Lois Saviniemi Sefcovic, niece of Marie Scheel with "the boys" — neighbors of Marie's who looked out for her and Weldon for about 30 years.

Zooley Parkhill celebrated her third birthday with great fanfare—a party on the Saturday before—and at church on THE day—March 15th. Special guests for the week were her grandmother **Debby Kohrt's** sister **Carol Miller** and **Debby** and Carol's mother **Maxine Collings** who were both visiting from **Wichita, Kansas**.

It was a treat to see **Rev. Patrick Russell** at church on March 1st. Now retired, we older folks knew Pat as a red-headed young student at **Huston-Tillotson** during the late 1960s. Pat was taken under the wing of **John Towery** and his family and Pat shared many fond memories of that



Debby Kohrt was delighted to have her mom and sister visiting recently. Visiting before church were son-in-law Jason Parkhill and Whit Bodman; front—Debby with sister Carol Miller and mom Maxine Collings

time. He was in Austin (along with his older brother, **Graham Russell**) to see his daughter, **Beverly Cloude**; and his granddaughters, **Gienie** and **Patricia**, ages seven and nine. They all came to church and enjoyed visiting with everyone. **Graham** and **Pat** both live in **Colorado** now, only about an hour away from each other, and see each other often.

Bill Phillips is still in a lot of pain from a fall about six weeks ago. He delayed getting in to see the doctor because

Heart of Texas Association News A New Name April

At our Association meeting on March 22nd hosted by **Evangelical UCC Lyons** with the help of **Friedens Gay Hill**, we started as the newly merged **Brazos** and **South Texas Associations** and ended with a new name for our new Association. During our discussion, we generally agreed that our Association is a “work in transition” in most areas, including merger of our finances and committee structure. However, in order to work on consolidating our bank accounts, to clarify with the UCC where (in what association) our ministers hold their ministerial standing, and to go ahead with work to set up a web site for good communication, it became clear to us that it was appropriate to select a new name at this meeting. After a good, lively discussion with several suggestions, the former Brazos and South Texas Associations overwhelmingly voted to become the Heart of Texas Association. And I am now using that name for the first time.

At our meeting, we also elected new officers from both the former Brazos and South Texas Association. Our new moderator is **John Boydston**, a licensed minister (retired from the Lyons church and currently attending St. Peter's Coupland). Our vice-moderator is Michael Reinert (member of Faith UCC, New Braunfels). Our co-treasurers are Joe Ward (member of Faith UCC, New Braunfels) and Larry Winkelmann (member of St. John's UCC, Burton). Currently the secretary's office is open, and we empowered the Executive Board to fill that position until the Association can vote on it next fall.

With a new identity comes new friends as we grow into our covenant in Christ together. This meeting was a great start in that we had representation from most of our churches with a large attendance (I don't have a count at this time) of folks ready to work constructively together in a trusting way with generous hearts. We voted to allow our treasurers, and a committee they may choose to gather, to help with merging our accounts. We voted, too, to allow our Executive Committees to take actions in the interim between now and the next fall meeting to organize and do the work of the Association. Representatives from our Church and Ministry Committees (soon to be a unified Committee on Ministry) have already worked hard together to put forward a well-received proposal for how they will begin work together. We decided to keep the dues “as is” for each church in the coming year (\$5 for former Brazos churches and \$4 for former South Texas churches), then look toward changing the dues structure next year. We accepted the recommendation to

put the committees together for the coming year, electing the following members: Co-chairs Charles Stark and Anne Wehrly, Vice chair and chair-elect Karl Tewold, Glen Schoeneberg, Michael Reinert, Scott Martin, Jewell Ellis-Eyler, John Norton, Debbie Brehm, ReyAnne Schmidt, and Whit Bodman.

What is next? Our association Executive Board and the new Church and Ministry Committee will meet concurrently April 11th at St. Peter's UCC Coupland to get started organizing. John Boydston will be working with a committee to draft a new constitution and by-laws to be circulated through our churches and voted on at the Fall Heart of Texas Association Meeting. We can look forward to coming up with creative ways for our churches from the two former associations to get to know each other and build our friendships.

One other great joy of this meeting was to hear from Sid Hall, pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church in Austin. Sid reported on the substantial work and discussion Trinity members have had, working toward a vote on possible dual affiliation with the UCC this spring. Our hopes and prayers are with them as they continue forward in this period of discernment.

Finally, I give thanks for the work of Marianne Muehr, our always gracious, open spirited Brazos Association moderator who has just completed her term. She has steered us through this process with grace and generosity. And many thanks to the Lyons and Gay Hill churches for their warmth, great hospitality, and a terrific dinner.

Blessings in Christ
Liz Nash
Heart of Texas Association Minister

because he thought it would "work itself out." It didn't, and now he and Betty are BOTH going to physical therapy three times a week and doing extensive exercises at home on the non-clinic days. Betty notes that it kind of eats up the hours of the day!



Rev. Pat Russell with Cathy Hubbs. Cathy remembers Pat as a young red-headed student at Huston-Tillotson in the early 1960s.

Cathy Hubbs is probably the only extant member of the church who remembers **Rev. Bert Miller's** pastorate which was from **July 1, 1950 - Fall, 1956**. After their arrival from **Yale** where Bert had just received his degree, Bert and his wife **Mary Margaret** were very active in the Austin community, especially in the early civil rights movement. **Mel Oakes** recently reconnected with Bert in Bal Harbor, Florida, as he is working on a history of the church, and they have had a number of good phone calls. Sadly, Bert's beloved Mary Margaret died last year. Bert and Mary Margaret were last here in 2001 for the centennial celebration of the church. The church is grateful to Bert for a wonderful memorial donation in Mary Margaret's name to the church memorial endowment fund. Find out more about Bert and Mary Margaret by going to http://congregationalchurchofaustin.org/cca_history/Congregational_Church_of_Austin_History/Anthony_Bertram_Miller.html

Dave and Sara Ross are both retired, so it wasn't that they were expecting a great vacation when they went to **Port Aransas** on March 12th. They just wanted a bit of a get-away. Dave had had a bit of a cold and they debated about going—but they did. They had a nice three-mile walk that evening, but when Dave woke up on that Friday he was having a lot of pain in his knee which got worse as the day progressed. By Saturday morning they decided to come home—and later that evening Sara had to call EMS as Dave had fallen and neither of them could get him up. To make a long story short, he was diagnosed with sepsis, an internal bacterial infection, that seems to have started in 5



A dedicated group from the women's book club. From left, Lynne Lymley, Pat Oakes, Nodie Murphy and Geneva Ross—including Sara Ross on Skype.

his knee. Sara notes that he has been in the hospital longer for this than he was when he had his sextuple by-pass surgery several years ago. He is finally feeling better and is set to go home sometime the last week of March. He will be on serious antibiotics for 4-6 weeks. Unfortunately, Sara picked up a bad cold about the same time and was unable to visit Dave for several days, although she did make it to the women's book club via **Skype**.

Former pastor **Yoshi Kaneda** sent a picture four and a half years, before coming to the U.S., Yoshi taught at **Doshisha High School** in **Kyoto, Japan**. Doshisha was founded by **Joseph Hardy Neesima**, the very first missionary to Japan commissioned by the **American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions** (the Congregationalists). While teaching there Yoshi directed the **Hosanna Chorus**. The Chorus celebrated its Centennial with a



Former Austin Congregational Church, UCC, pastor Yoshi Kaneda after rehearsal with his former choir students at Doshisha High School in Kyoto, Japan.

dents, 42 strong, sang "Beautiful Savior" arranged by F.M. Christiansen, "Roll Jordan Roll" a Negro spiritual, "Exultate Deo" by A. Scarlatti and "The Lord Bless You and Keep You" by Peter C. Lutkin under his direction. The audience gave them a big ovation at the end of each song. Later at the Reception Party, Yoshi was among three former teachers honored as "Consultant of the Hosanna Chorus" and was given a beautiful crystal plaque

Julia Deisler reports that her business, *Gypsy Grove Foods*, will be participating in this year's **Austin Food and Wine Festival**. She will be giving out samples of their line of **Chimichurris** at **The Grand Tasting** on Saturday 4/25 and Sun. 4/26.

Aaron Carter-Cohn sends his regards to all of us in Austin. His wife **Quintina** arrived in **Columbus, Ohio**, from **Nigeria** on March 2nd and he was starting his Ph.D candidacy qualifying exams in mid-March at Ohio State University. Quintina is staying here in the U.S., her green card should arrive shortly and she finished school before she came.

Frances Alford was sorry not to make it to church when she was down in Austin for a quilt festival, but cedar fever had hit her hard. She enjoyed the time down there with two sisters, Sallie and Anne. She has remodeled her house in Grafton, Vermont, extensively. It was gutted, and due to dry rot, half of it had to be torn down and rebuilt. (That was the 1780 part). She now has a three-story house with a very open plan and an elevator. The entire third floor is studio space and there is a full basement as well. She moved back in just before Christmas after being completely out for eighteen months. It is taking awhile to get moved back in. The Congregational Church is across the street from her and it is also being renovated. The community uses the church for so many things as it is an acoustically perfect structure.

Ruth Koenig is recuperating from carpal tunnel surgery. While she is not quite sure that the surgery is a complete success, there is still healing taking place.

Barbara Burnham is recently ensconced in her new digs. Her new address is 2518 B Howellwood Way, Austin 78748. Her phone number remains the same: 512-809-2966. She reports that the move was an ordeal, but is grateful for the assistance of Chester and Robin Rosson, without whom she could not have accomplished it. The new place is much smaller, but in a lovely area close to her previous home, and close to Rob, Julia, and Sammy. (The house she rented previously is being renovated for sale.) Thanks to a tip from Tom, she was able to donate many furniture items to Lifeworks, and still have enough "excess baggage" for the Youth Garage Sale. She hopes not to move again for a very long time!

Ranae Beeker reports from Bremerton, Washington, that work is going well, it is busy, and the hospital where she works was acquired by a large hospital system, which has in turn offered many opportunities for change in the department and hospital, depending on the day. Life is good, folks are good, her daughter Alethea and her husband Willie are expecting in July. Ranae is so excited! Her son Gavin is also doing fine and lives in Seattle, working for Amazon.

Talley Summerlin wrote that his wife Elizabeth Freese has successfully completed all coursework and two of four comprehensive exams for her PhD. By late 2015/early 2016, her dissertation work will begin. Vivian just finished a great basketball season in which her team made the league's post-season semi-finals, almost beating the team that ended up winning it all. Later this month she plays the role of Iago in her school's production of *Aladdin*. Rose just turned 13 and has started track practice (which Vivian is also trying for the first time this season). She is enjoying middle school and is particularly enthralled with her Chinese class, where she excels. Getting her to speak English can be a challenge on some days! Talley continues to practice public relations in New York City and does lots of work with Philips Lighting, which has allowed him to do projects involving the Times Square Ball, vertical urban farms, and the Sci-fi channel's Sharknado films. They miss all of us--and they miss Austin!



Fred Burchsted digging out the dining room window

Former member Juditha Burchsted (late 1980s and early 1990s) wanted to show us what spring looks like in Boston this year: That's Juditha standing in the driveway, Gus, 17) shoveling the roof (having just walked onto it from the pile behind the house), and Fred digging out the dining room window so they can get some light. Their dining room is not in a dark basement, but is a one story ranch on a slab. The Boston area broke the all-time record for snow in the middle of March (they're at something like 108 or 109 inches) with more expected just a few days before the

first day of spring. Note that the date of the photos are a month before spring and much more snow fell during the following month.



Juditha Burchsted and the pile of snow in her driveway in Beverly, MA



Gus Burchsted shoveling the roof in Beverly, Massachusetts.

We haven't seen much of Bill and Carolyn Howe recently, but they have 3 very good reasons. They had 3 grandchildren in 5 weeks last summer and have been visiting and helping the two in California and 1 in Pennsylvania. All are fine and doing well. Bill and Carolyn are also fine and enjoying the rain and the resulting wildflowers. As they have no city water, they are happy that their water tanks are almost full after several good rains. Because of all of their travels, they don't come in to Austin from the Wimberley/Blanco area as much. They send their regards and wish us all the best.

Paul Deisler writes from his perch on the shores of Corpus Christi Bay that 2014 ended with a fine Christmas visit to Austin where he saw friends at the CCA and elsewhere and, also, family. 2015 began with his keeping a promise to give the sermon at his church in Corpus, something he had never done before. He now knows why he did not become a pastor: putting together a 15-minute sermon takes far too much hard work. To his surprise, Paul received a standing

ovation. He must have hit the spot, and wishes that he could count on doing the same if he is ever asked to speak again. Since then he and his daughter Jane have been on a 15-day cruise to Hawaii, returning on March 15, and spending a few days in the San Francisco Bay Area beforehand visiting Paul's cousin and his wife and some old Shell friends. The weather in the Bay Area was beautiful and the visits were excellent as well as being long overdue. At sea, the weather was so stormy that stops at Kawai and Maui had to be canceled but Paul and Jane didn't mind. They both like life aboard ship and two additional days at sea were just fine with them. They met and talked with many interesting people and enjoyed going ashore on Oahu and Hawaii, especially visiting the botanical gardens at Hilo and a superb lunch in beautiful surroundings at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in Waikiki. Jane, a biologist, was especially enchanted by the gardens. A very fine Ukrainian trio, Amethyst (piano and two violins), played several times during the trip, to Paul and Jane's delight. On the way home the ship, the Princess Star, had to make a foreign stop (in keeping with the Jones Act of 1933). The stop was at Ensenada in Baja California, where they toured the town and heard and saw mariachis and dancers perform excellently. Paul and Jane got a good, brief, taste of Mexico! Paul and Jane had thought that a 15-day trip would be long enough. They were ready to go on immediately, however, when it came time to land again in San Francisco. Paul and Jane have further trips planned. Paul's chronic abdominal pain, cause unknown, will not stop him from enjoying what he can!

Congratulations to Sarah Kirch whose art work, based on her January stay in Siena, Italy, will soon be on display at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago ArtBash show. It's digital art, which her mom Lisa doesn't exactly understand, but she will find out. Sarah has informed her mother that she is tired of snow! Incidentally, Lisa's great-aunt attended the Chicago art school about 100 years ago. As for Lisa, she has received a Short-Term Research Grant from the Renaissance Society of America which will pay for a trip to Frankfurt this summer to continue her research.

At the risk of being really obnoxious grandparents, Pat and Mel Oakes are delighted to share that their granddaughter Emily Buck, 14, (Beth and Eugene's daughter) won a national gold medal from Scholastic Art and Writing Awards (some of you may remember Scholastic and Junior Scholastic magazines from your school days). Emily, an 8th grader was competing against high school students in the Critical Essay category. She wrote about the pros and cons of chemical and organic fertilizers in farming. Since the Oakes/Buck family will be in Hawaii for the graduation of Emily and Ethan's cousin Sarah Buck, they will have to miss the awards ceremony at Carnegie Hall. It should also be noted that the day Emily found out about the award was also the day she got her braces removed. Definitely a five star day!

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Return Service Requested

May Visitor Deadline—April 21, 2015

History Corner by Pat and Mel Oakes

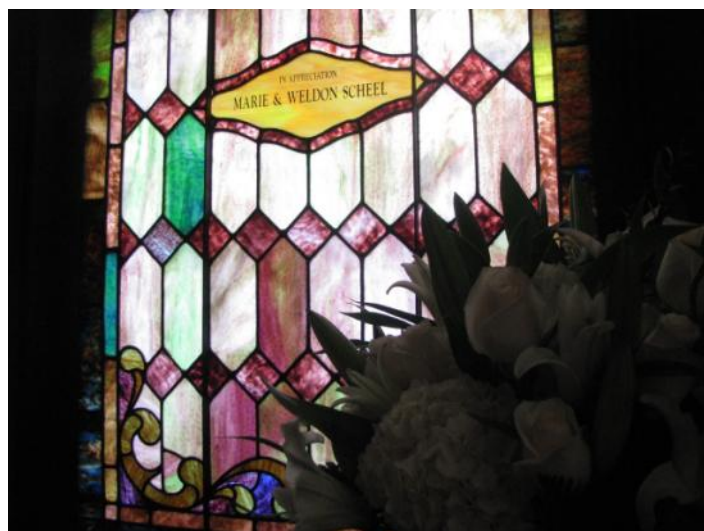
Marie (October 4, 1914-February 21, 2015) and **Weldon Scheel** (September 4, 1911-January 1, 2006) were part of our church family for more than 50 years. Both of them were music teachers in **AISD** and also shared their many musical gifts with the church, Marie as choir director for about 30 years and Weldon fill-

and met Marie who was studying voice there. They fell in love, Weldon stayed in **Chicago**, and in **1940** they married and Weldon brought her to Texas. Marie had no idea what Texas was like and was not too entranced with the heat. After **WWII** (where Weldon and Joe played in various bands together), they settled in Austin, coming at the invitation of **Florence and Joe Castle**, who by that time were attending the Congregational Church of Austin. For much more information on Marie and Weldon, go to http://congregationalchurchofaustin.org/cca_history/Congregational_Church_of_Austin_History/Weldon_and_Marie_Scheel.html



1986--from the church directory Marie and Weldon Scheel

ing in on the piano. Marie was from **Hancock, Michigan**, and Weldon was from **Lockhart, Texas**. They met in 1937 at the **Sherwood School of Music in Chicago**. Weldon had gone for a 6-week-long summer course



Jaime Hadley took this picture of the Weldon and Marie Scheel stained glass medallion at the church--last one on the choir side--shown with flowers from Marie's memorial service.