

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt



Sometimes people can really suck. Literally. Sometimes they can just suck the energy, the vitality, the life right out of me; I can feel it. And they suck it from others; I can see it.

Sometimes people can be stifling; their presence can suffocate, they can have a soul-smothering effect. Sometimes people can be oppressive or domineering. They push or drag others down. Squeeze the joy, the health, the creativity or the spirit out of others. Use and abuse, belittle and demean, attack and scapegoat others. Sometimes people radiate a negative energy, throw off a bad vibe. Being around them is a downer, a buzzkill. They don't even like being around themselves.

Yes, sometimes people can really suck. Literally.

It's not easy living in a world where people can really suck. Or as Tibetan Buddhists might put it, in a setting sun world. For Tibetan Buddhists, the image of the setting sun conveys the many ways people can suck. OK, I've never actually encountered the word "suck" in a Tibetan Buddhist's description of the setting sun, but that's how I understand it. People who embody the setting sun suck the life out of others. Or smother others, throw off a bad vibe, in some way cause harm. Whatever the case may be, the setting sun diminishes the light in this world.

But in this tradition, there's also the Great Eastern Rising Sun. The rising sun brings the light, increases the light, spreads the light. Those who embody the Great Eastern Rising Sun realize that their bodies are conduits through which vital life energy can flow into the world. They beam positive vivacious liveliness into the world, radiate good vibes. They produce liberating, healing and reconciling effects in the world. They uplift, encourage and inspire. They love with open hearts, think with open minds, share with open hands. They grow towards the sun and bloom, and help others do the same. They speak their truth, care for others and enjoy being themselves.

The Great Eastern Rising Sun, and the western setting sun. It's great imagery. But here's the thing. There's only one sun, not two. The sun that's now rising in the east is the sun that's now setting in the west. Within each one of us. People are not *either* a rising sun person *or* a setting sun person. We're both. I've not met a single person in my entire life who was *either* a rising sun *or* a setting sun. Everyone I've ever known, including me, embodies both sunrise and sunset. We give to others and the earth in beneficial ways, and we suck from others and the earth in harmful ways.

That's the human condition. Sunrise and sunset. We increase the light and diminish the light. The question is, do we have the spiritual wherewithal to increase the light more than we diminish it? Can we pour more vivacious beneficial energy into the world, and suck less vitality and life from the world? Can we tip our scale more toward sunrise and less toward sunset?

We're living in a time right now when we're facing a pervasive setting sun. The sun's going down hard and it's going down fast. Yes, I'm talking about Donald Trump; he exudes a powerful setting sun vibe. But I'm also talking about the ways we all produce harmful effects in the world. Each one of us. Even the most dedicated and spiritual climate justice activist beaming strong rays of sunrise energy into the world oozes some harmful sunset vibes as well. We all do.

The trick is to face and acknowledge our setting sun as honestly as possible. To study our lives, and to confess as truthfully as possible, the harm we're doing. And to consciously practice doing less harm with every choice we make. To practice sucking out less light from others and the world.

The trick is also to develop the spiritual wherewithal to embody the rising sun every day, in as many ways possible with as many people possible. To make a vow to consciously practice shining light into the world, in as many ways possible with as many people possible. To commit ourselves to living in a way that benefits the world as much as possible.

I'm grateful for all the people who're doing this right now. Confessing how they diminish the light, practicing how to increase the light. And it's not just a Tibetan Buddhist practice. It's a human practice to which Tibetan Buddhists are pointing. I personally know many people who're practicing what I'm describing, and not one of them is a Tibetan Buddhist. I don't personally know any Tibetan Buddhists, but I know people who're practicing what I'm describing. It's a human phenomenon, one that expresses itself through many traditions. Call it practicing *tikkun olam*, Hebrew for "repairing the world." Call it embodying the light of Christ—the light of hope, peace,

love and joy. Call it channeling the spirit of the Goddess to save Mother Earth. Call it whatever you want. If you're committed to rising up as bright, courageous and beneficent energy, if you're actively seeking to liberate, heal and reconcile this world, then I'm grateful for you.

CHRISTMAS CANDLELIGHT SERVICE AND CHRISTMAS OPEN DOOR DINNER

Our Christmas Candlelight Service and Party will be held on Sunday, December 18, at 7pm. We'll gather for readings, carols and candle lighting in the sanctuary, and then move to the Fellowship Hall to share eggnog and good cheer. On Christmas Day, which is a Sunday this year, we'll offer a brief and informal worship service at 12:00 pm (featuring our Joyful Noise Orchestra), and then open the doors to serve a feast to anyone who is hungry.

Our CCA Endowment Fund: A Wonderful Time to Support It

The Board of Trustees is encouraging you to consider contributing to the CCA Endowment Fund in memory of, or in honor of, a loved one. Due to the generosity of an anonymous donor, all contributions will be matched up to \$10,000! This is a unique and wonderful opportunity to strengthen our church's ministry and presence in the world, now and in the future, by building up our CCA Endowment Fund.

Church Leadership

Trustee Chair	Don Brown
Deacons Chair	Jennifer 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
Coordinator	John Burlinson
Clerk	Betty Bodman
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Webmistress	Sara Ross
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

Church Announcements

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 or 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.

The Front Porch Lunch ministry is in GREAT need of a few more **volunteers** to serve lunches. Lunch is served to area homeless (mostly Life-Works 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.

Personals

by Pat Oakes

Over the past year or more, our church has been building a relationship with the **Nueces Mosque** which is just blocks from our church at 23rd St. and San Antonio. On **Friday, November 18th**, nearly 100 folks gathered to stand outside the mosque in solidarity with our Muslim neighbors as people arrived for Friday prayers. The supporters were greeted graciously by the imam **Sheikh Mohamed-Umer Esmail** and members of the mosque and were provided with refreshments after the service. Included in that 100 or so were pastor **Tom VandeStadt**, **Jen** and **Tess Howicz**, and office manager **Rimma Aguirre**, who are shown in the photo with the banner which our church displays in the Towery wing windows.



11/16/16 Oumer Oumer walks past supporters (including Tom VandeStadt, Tess and Jen Howicz, and Rimma Aguirre holding the banner) as he arrives for prayers at the Nueces Mosque in Austin. Photo credit to JAY JANNER / AMERICAN-STATESMAN

The congregation celebrated pastor **Tom VandeStadt's** birthday a day early at coffee hour after church on **November 6**. There was chocolate birthday cake and an enthusiastic singing of "Happy birthday, dear Tom!"

Barbara Sterling and **Bob Brander** miss all of us at the **Congregational Church**. We haven't seen much of them as they moved to **Wimberley** last year. Bob and Barbara are doing as well as can be expected. Bob's Alzheimer's is not getting better, but he's "sort of" holding his own. He cannot remember anything longer than a very few minutes, but remains cheerful and good natured. Barbara is grateful for the support of her son and daughter who live in the Wimberley area, too.



11/20/16 Our violinist Amy Harris at Beth Gleason's installation at her new church, Christ Congregational UCC in Ft. Morgan, CO

Beth Gleason was installed at her new church, **Christ Congregational UCC** in **Ft. Morgan, Colorado**, on **Sunday, Nov. 20**. While we sorely missed **Amy Harris**, our stellar violinist, in our trio that day, she was present to play at Beth's installation along with another Austin connection, **Geoff Kort**, the former choral director of **Trinity Church** in **Hyde Park** and a member of **Conspirare** who now lives in **Denver**. **Rev. Sue Artt**, the **Rocky Mountain Conference Minister**, was there to lead the service and the laying on of hands.

Josh Sabik, who graduated from **Southwest Texas State** last spring, recently took a new job as a sales rep for **Main Street Hub**, whose mission is to support thriving local economies by providing social media services to small and medium-sized businesses. He has been on the job for more than a month and is enjoying it very much.

The congregation has been enjoying getting to know the **Rutherford** family (**Bryan, Shaela**, and their daughters **Naomi**, 4, and **Ena**, 2) over the past 5 months or so. In early September, Shaela and their daughters, were visiting the **Johnson Wildflower Center** in south Austin when Ena was bitten on her left leg by at least two rattlesnakes. She was hospitalized at **Dell Children's**, where she stayed for about a month enduring a series of surgeries on her leg and foot and a long recovery. Shaela stayed with her almost the entire time she was there, and Naomi spent a lot of time with various family members around the area, and eventually Ena healed enough to come home. She is now walking (and climbing!) again, with only a slight limp, and will be receiving some physical therapy to get her back to full strength. The Rutherfords are extremely thankful for the resources and expertise of the children's hospital, and for the support of the congregation!



10/16--Debby Kohrt (2nd from the right)) with her medical team



10/16/16 Debby Kohrt is 4th from the right, front row, with her Smiles International colleagues

Debby Kohrt reports that the **Smiles International Foundation** once again had its smiles surgical mission in **Cabo San Lucas, Mexico**, this past **October**. She was with a wonderful group of doctors and nurses who gathered, some old acquaintances and some new. They operated on 46 patients over 3 1/2 days....a record for the group! They are so thankful for their **Cabo Rotary Club** friends who housed them in a beautiful hotel and providing them breakfast and lunches during their working hours. Debby feels so honored to be part of this wonderful mission! Their next mission is next **April 2017**.

Thanks to **Lucy Hanouille**, a staunch member of our choir and also of **Tapestry Singers**, who made beautiful origami hearts to share with the congregation. She made them as a form of therapy for her after the election and as a reminder to all of us that we all are loved in good times and hard times.



10/16 Debby Kohrt all set to help operate with Smiles International in Cabo San Lucas

On **Sunday, Nov. 20**, we observed **Texas Impact's Health and Justice Sabbath** with **Regina Rogoff**, CEO of the **People's Community Clinic** as our speaker. The clinic was started in the basement of our church in the 1970s with the encouragement of our pastor, **Rev. John Towery**. When the clinic began, there were 15 employees who helped with medical care for folks in Austin who fell through the cracks, were homeless, or had no insurance. Now

Heart of Texas Association News

December

by Liz Nash

Our Fall Association Meeting on October 29th was a joyous gathering, with St. John's UCC in Burton offering their always warm welcome. Many thanks to Glen Schoeneberg and Risa Garza for an opening worship that included sharing about those God given people who have made a real difference in our lives. Highlights included a heartfelt recognition for the ministry of Charles Stark as he retires at the end of the year and service of consecration that offered our love and blessing to Carl Schwartz-King as he begins licensed ministry. Carl is our first licensed minister to be trained through the Certificate of Ministry online program at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and he is now Minister of Congregational Care at United Christian Church of Austin.

We continue to celebrate our ministers who are retiring at the end of the year. Bethany Congregational Church in San Antonio will recognize and celebrate the ministry of their pastor, Gerry Metzger, on Sunday, December 15th. In addition to his ministry in this conference at Bethany and at Redeemer UCC in Zuehl, Gerry has served the community, Association, and Conference with wisdom, humor, and faith in many ways, including (as a sample) his dedicated work as the South Texas Association Minister, as the President of the South Central Conference Board of Directors, and most recently in his support of Dellview Elementary School. Also, on November 12th, Friedens UCC in Geronimo hosted a great celebration for Charles and Bonnie Stark, where many friends gathered for fellowship, sharing, and a video/slideshow that highlighted great memories. Our prayers and blessings go with these friends as they enter a new time in their lives and ministries.

We have recently welcomed two new Members in Discernment who are pursuing ordination and two new pastors to our Association. Risa Garza is a student in the online program of Chicago Theological Seminary. Many of us know Risa as a licensed

minister and as the Associate Minister at St. John's UCC in Burton. Andrew Young is a student at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and is finishing his internship at Trinity Church of Austin, where he is now a member. Pamela Jefferson, a member of United Christian in Austin, moved here from the Houston Association and serves as a chaplain with Hospice Austin and St. David's Healthcare. Ryan Hart is the new church start pastor of Open Cathedral UCC in Leander, and moved here from the Southern California Nevada Conference. I hope many of you will have the opportunity to meet and welcome these friends in Christ to the Heart of Texas Association.

Finally, here is a great opportunity. Sign ups for mission trip/workcamp weeks at Back Bay Mission in 2018 open up on January 1st, 2017. The weeks fill very quickly -- some as soon as the signups begin. For more information, go to <https://thebackbaymission.org/get-involved/volunteer/mission-trips/> (and then go to the Mission Trip Calendars links at the bottom of the page to find out how to sign up).

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash
Heart of Texas Association Minister

Personals (continued)

by Pat Oakes

more than 40 years later (after a number of years in a large building at I-35 and 30th St.), the People's Community Clinic is housed in a new, much larger facility near the Social Security offices off of I-35 and 290--with more than 200 employees providing healthcare for thousands of needy people in Austin.



10/16 Gymnast Scarlett Quisenberry with her most recent medals

Congratulations to 10-year-old **Scarlett Quisenberry**, who took **2nd place** in the all around at the **District Championships** for **gymnastics** last month. She did particularly well on vault and floor. In fact, it was the best vault of her life because she said, "I decided to try running with my right leg first instead of my left. And it changed everything."

Liz Nash spent the week of **Nov. 12-19** at the **UCC's Back Bay Mission** in **Biloxi, Mississippi**, her third work camp week with friends from **Pil-**

grim Congregational UCC, Houston, and from **Kankakee, Illinois**. The group this year also included new friends from **Land O'Lakes, Wisconsin**, and **St. Joe, Missouri** -- folks often stay and work with people from other churches on Back Bay work camp trips. This year, the group helped remodel and repair a house for a woman who holds two jobs who couldn't afford to pay for much-needed work. Liz enjoys learning new skills every year from others in the group -- the lessons this time were how to install Pergo flooring and greatly improving her caulking skills, plus plenty of practice painting (and getting paint in her hair). The group ate like royalty, thanks to one of the Houston folks who comes to provide her special TLC by cooking great meals. Liz has been on (she thinks) 5 work camps over the years at Back Bay, including one with Congregational Church right before **Hurricane Katrina** destroyed much of the area in 2005, in addition to leading youth there on a **Conference Annual Meeting** workday in about 1991. Over the years, she has found that the spirit of welcome in the Back Bay community is always there -- a place that is made holy by the great spirit of hospitality that continues through the years. She recently joined the **Back Bay Board of Directors** and is glad to continue the work that several in our church have done in past years as board members.

Eunice Paul sends her love from **Leatherhead, England**, to all of those who remember her. Eunice's late husband **Bob** was on the faculty at the Presbyterian seminary here in the 1980s. They lived in Austin for a number of years, and were members of the church. She reads the newsletter every month and especially enjoys looking at the pictures of folks she knew way back then. At age **95** she says she is doing pretty well--still living on her own. Her daughter **Lydia** and her son-in-law **Dean Tapley** live about 12 miles away and look in on her often. She recently had a small growth removed from her right hand and was quite shocked when she was told that she could not use the hand for 6 weeks. She is now past that and is back to doing things in her usual right-handed way. She remembers fondly the summer that **John** and **Eleanor Towery** exchanged pulpits with **Dean**, a Congregational pastor in England. Those of us

who were here then remember Dean and Lydia's two little boys enjoying the warm Texas summer.



11/19/16 Nodie, Ned, Sarah, Seth, and Dennis Murphy celebrating an early Thanksgiving and Dennis's 75th birthday

Dennis Murphy celebrated his **75th birthday** in fine style and over a period of several days. The biggest surprise came on **Saturday, Nov. 19th**. The family had planned an early Thanksgiving/late birthday celebration with daughter **Sarah** and her family coming up from **San Antonio**. Unbeknownst to Dennis and **Nodie**, daughter Sarah and son **Seth** (who lives in Round Rock) had conspired with their brother **Ned** to bring Ned here for the celebration. Ned had no time off from his Army job at **Ft. Drum** in upstate **New York**, so it was a quick trip--and his wife **Faye** and baby **James** could not make it. Thanks to the frequent flyer miles from his Uncle **Larbi** (Sarah's husband who travel world-wide for his job), Ned made it to Austin for 48 hours. Imagine the stunned and delighted expressions on Dennis and Nodie's faces when they opened their door and there were Sarah, Seth, and Ned waiting for hugs. Later in the day, Larbi called from **Cape Town, South Africa**, to see if all of the connections had been made. Also at the gathering, there was an opportunity to introduce **Carie Whittaker**, the fiancée of Nodie and Dennis's oldest grandson **Randy Sennour**--a late March wedding is planned.

Cheryl Appel was glad to be in Austin from **Madison, WI**, for a short visit to see her dad **Vic Appel** honored at a "flightless" Honor Flight sponsored by his assisted living facility and **Honor Flight Austin**.

Honor Flight, as some may know, is an organization committed to honoring veterans with a visit to **Washington, D.C.** to see the war memorials. Although this Honor Flight didn't involve an actual trip, Vic had a great time at the ceremony at **Belmont Village**. He enjoyed marching in with other veterans during the opening procession, as well as hearing everyone's contributions to the various war efforts. **Lt. Victor Appel** served in **Korea** from **1951—1953**. He remembers getting his draft notice on the day he graduated from college, following ROTC training as a student. At the time he planned to go into law, and he was assigned the job of military policeman. During the war, he primarily supervised prisoners in a prisoner of war camp. He felt fortunate not to have been in direct combat. After leaving Korea, he decided to pursue psychology rather than law, and was grateful to the Army for allowing him to go to graduate school with his GI bill. Vic also got to see part of an Emmy-nominated documentary showing an Honor Flight Austin trip to Washington, which featured the D.C. war memorials, interviews with other veterans and volunteers, and the Welcome Home parade at the airport. After the film, Honor Flight coordinators conducted a "Mail Call", presenting each veteran with a gift bag filled with memorabilia and, most touching to Vic, letters from loved ones, friends, and local school children. In his package, Vic was surprised to find a copy of a letter he had received in 1954 written by his former commanding officer thanking him for his contributions to the unit's success and subsequent formal recognition by the U.S. government. Following a truly impressive rendition of the "**Star Spangled Banner**," everyone enjoyed a reception sponsored by the facility.



11/11/16 Vic Appel, waving at the back right, being introduced as part of an Honor Flight program honoring veterans who live at Belmont Village



10/28/16 Beth, Sarah and Joe, Mardie and Durham with Pat and Mel at the SF City Hall for Stuart and Jay's wedding

Mel and Pat Oakes enjoyed a wonderful 5-day trip to San Francisco at the end of October for the wedding of Mel's Cleveland, OH, nephew Stuart Oakes to Jay Ruffner, his partner of 25 years--on the 25th anniversary of their first date. Stuart's father could not come, so other Oakeses filled the gap--Mardie lives there, Beth came from Iowa, and Sarah and Joe came from D.C. Stuart's sister Jennifer came from Dallas and another Oakes cousin, Lisa, came from Atlanta. The wedding was at the beautifully restored City Hall. Pat and Mel's 4 1/2 year old grandson Durham was so impressed with the ceremony, Stuart and Jay's tuxedos, and the judge's black robes--all in the grand surroundings of the City Hall--that he was quiet and attentive during the proceedings. It was Pat and Mel's first real trip since her difficult back surgeries and recuperation this year--and that was a great joy. Pat still has a lot more recuperating to do, but making this trip was a real boost for her and the family.

The Road Scholar program, *Canadian Explorer*, took Marilyn Gaddis and George Carruthers on a very interesting twelve day "rail odyssey" from Montreal to Vancouver in late September/early October. Flying to Montreal, they joined thirty-four others eager to explore the provinces. Montreal walking visits included the Notre Dame Basilica; Place d'Armes; the plant-lined pedestrian square, Place Jacques Cartier; and the St. Lawrence River waterfront. The second day was spent at *Exporail*, the Canadian Railway Museum. They rode around the

grounds in a 1959 streetcar and wandered among restored engines and cars. Later they boarded the VIA commuter train to Toronto. In Toronto, they spent an afternoon in the Queen's Park. A bonus the next day was the Dale Chiluly traveling glass exhibit at the Royal Ontario Museum. Then it was off for three nights aboard VIA, crossing four provinces to Jasper National Park. With no freight delays, four hours was spent in Winnipeg at the *The Forks*, a park at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. Crossing the Canadian prairie was similar to our Central States with miles of grain crops and few houses. Entering the Rocky Mountains, the lumbering industry was very evident with huge piles of logs and chips! Marilyn got her "mountain fix" when the snowcapped Rockies came into view! The Jasper stay included a trip out to and a walk on the Athabasca Glacier, which is receding at the rate of 16 feet a year. Having last visited the glacier twelve years ago, the "global warming effect" was very evident! Also viewed were the Maligne Canyon and Falls and the Athabasca Falls. The small but interesting Jasper Yellowhead Museum completed the Jasper National Park visit. After an overnight on the train, Vancouver, B.C. came into view! There was a quick tour around Stanley Park (largest urban park on the continent) and lunch at Granville Island Market. Also, a visit to the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology to examine a large collection of artifacts of indigenous peoples. The last morning of the program was a guided walk to the West End, one of the city's oldest neighborhoods. The guide described how the city is divided into grids with retail, educational, and recreational areas. Newer buildings include "rooftop" gardens and parks. They watched the Convention Center grass topped roof being mowed! What a "grand odyssey" it was for two train buffs to be able to travel in VIA's restored 1950's "silvery cars" across Canada! (What one can do with government support!) Arriving back home, Marilyn and George flew to Washington, D.C. to attend the funeral, with full military honors, for George's best Air Force "buddy" at Arlington National Cemetery. While there, Marilyn visited the graves of her paternal great-grandparents. Her great-grandfather was instrumental in the design and building of the Memorial Amphitheater. His grave marker says, "He lobbied Congress long and hard for the funds." (Nothing has changed!) On Sunday, Nov. 20, Marilyn (88) and George (92) joined us for worship from San Marcos

and then hosted coffee hour with the help of the Deacons, celebrating their **30th wedding anniversary**. They were married at the church by **Rev. John Towery** 30 years ago.



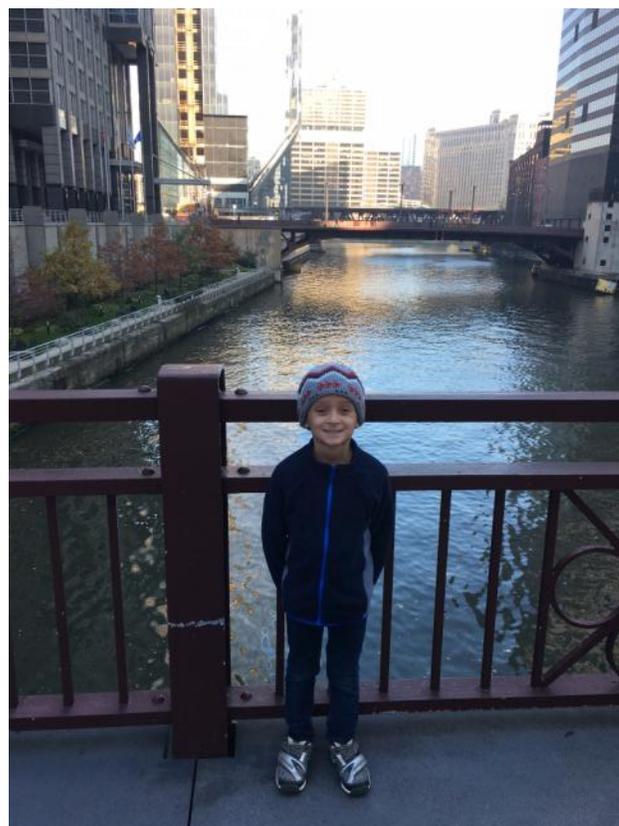
10/16 Intrepid travelers George Carruthers (92) and Marilyn Gaddis (88) at the Athabasca glacier in the Canadian Rockies

Office manager **Rimma Aguirre**'s husband **Joe** had to take a business trip to their hometown of **Chicago** in early **November**, so Rimma and 6-year-old son **Sam** seized the opportunity to fly home with him and visit her parents. Rimma's father **Aron** was diagnosed with stage 4 pancreatic cancer last year, so she's been taking every opportunity to visit and spend time with him. On their third day, Rimma and Sam joined her mom **Dina** bright and early on the **Metra** commuter train to downtown, and they spent the day taking in the sights. It was so exciting to show the city to Sam as a tourist! They ate breakfast in the **French Market**, then went up to the **SkyDeck** of the **Sears Tower** (they flat out refuse to call it by any other name), went to **Navy Pier** to ride on the ferris wheel and hang out at the **Chicago Children's**



11/16 Rimma Aguirre and her son Sam at the Sears Tower SkyDeck

Museum, and enjoyed the unseasonably beautiful sunny weather. That night, they came back to Rimma's parents' house, ordered in pizza, and watched a movie together. Overall, it was a fantastic little visit, even though they didn't get to see much of Joe since he was stuck in meetings and had to meet colleagues for dinner.



11/16 Sam Aguirre on the Jackson St Bridge overlooking the Chicago River

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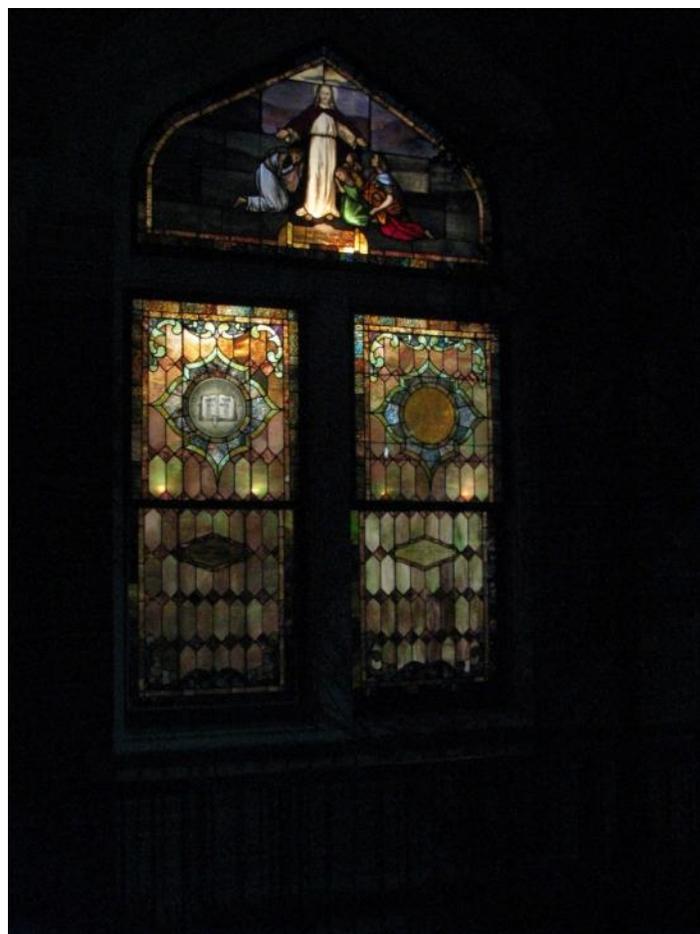
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January Visitor Deadline—December 21, 2016

History Corner

by Pat and Mel Oakes

There has been a traditional candlelight carol service at the church for more than 50 years. You might wonder why the service is not on Christmas Eve as is the case for so many churches. Because of our close ties with the **University of Texas** over the years--and because so many folks are out-of-town on a longer holiday, the service has usually been the Sunday evening of the week before Christmas. This year the service will be on **December 18**. For many years, the sanctuary was decorated by **Hildegard Everett**, a long-time member of the church whose father, **Dr. John Mathias Kuehne**, a UT physics faculty member, was a founding member of the church. In recent years, **Jaime Hadley** has taken over the decorating task. You might also wonder why verses of "Silent Night" are sung in German. It is not just because the carol was originally written in German. The reason is that many of the early church members (Wupperman, Kuehne, Andl, Bickler, etc.) were of German descent and grew up speaking German. For about 40 years, folks convened at the home of **Pat** and **Mel Oakes** after the service for a festive open house. A new tradition started last year with a Christmas celebration in the fellowship hall following the service.



Dec. 2012 Jaime Hadley decorated the sanctuary for the Christmas carol service