

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt



Soil, sole, soul. In his book, *Earth-Honoring Faith*, Larry Rasmussen riffs on how a number of faith traditions connect our human souls to Earth's soil through the soles of our feet. Soles touch soil, grounding embodied souls to Earth's body. Our soles' intimate relationship with soil creates a sacred soul connection. Or as Thoreau put it, "heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads."

Xavier Rudd beautifully illustrates this reality in his music video, *Come People*. The soles of his bare feet dance-walk down the sidewalk of an urban landscape through throngs of mostly rushed, distracted, harried, disconnected people.

A few notice and join him as he leads them to a vibrantly lush countryside, his soles stepping lightly on living soil as he invokes the Great Spirit. Images of Earth's stunning biodiversity are interspersed with the faces of those who have followed him, now more relaxed and happier. Then we see his body emerge from Earth's body, all covered in mud—soil and water. The birth of Earth's human creature. *Adama. Homo*. All the while we hear his voice sing, "I believe we are one, we are sacred. So why are we so divided?"

The video's effect is poignant and inspiring. An embodied human soul, intimately connected to Spirit and earth, seeking to reconnect other soles and souls that have become tragically disconnected. The very definition of religion—to stitch back together.

The Hebrew rabbis were on to something, more than they themselves appreciated, when they said God created the first human, Adam, from dust, soil, earth. Adam is derived from the Hebrew *adama*, which means dust, soil, earth. We know today that the human body did evolve from the Earth, from water and soil, the ecosphere. Without the benefit of our scientific knowledge, the ancient rabbis understood humanity's intimate relationship to Earth's soil. Created within the complex matrix of Earth's natural relationships, Adam is a Spirit inspired embodiment of earth's very own matter and energy, water and minerals, gases and nutrients. Earth with a human soul.

In Latin, *humus* means soil vibrant with life. From *humus* we derive humble and humility—close to the soil, down to earth, well-grounded. And *homo*, man. Chafing against humility, we appended the additional title *sapiens* to name ourselves *homo sapiens*. Wise man.

Larry Rasmussen, Xavier Rudd, and a growing host of souls whose soles are in touch with Earth's soil, are warning us that *homo* has a *sapiens* crisis. Humans are suffering a crisis of wisdom. Not a dearth of intellect. Not a lack of scientific knowledge. Not an inability to analyze, calculate, reason, and apply. No, a

Church Announcements

crisis of wisdom—an infinitely deeper mode of mindful, open-hearted, soul-inspired knowing. An acute sensitivity to, realization of, and appreciation for the inherent relational quality of reality. An embodied knowledge, one that arises from the intimate on-going interplay between our human bodies and Earth's body. Between soil, sole, and soul.

Homo suffers a *sapiens* crisis when we perceive our human bodies and identities to be separate from the matrix of Earth's relationships within which "we live and move and have our being." When we suffer the delusion that we are surrounded by nature rather than embodied expressions of nature. This crisis of human wisdom produces outcomes that are not pretty. As Pope Francis warned in his recent Encyclical, "once the human being declares independence the very foundations of our life begin to crumble" The antidote to a crisis of wisdom is the cultivation of wisdom. Again, not just more intellectual knowledge *about the earth*, but an embodied awareness of ourselves as parts *of the earth*.

It's clear that humans and Earth will be better off if we live up to the name we've given ourselves, *homo sapiens*. We, along with all the other diverse life forms, cannot flourish harmoniously on Earth as long as the dominant species, *homo*, is lacking *sapiens*. By declaring independence, even in subtle ways, we lose touch with reality, and we cannot be simultaneously wise and out of touch with reality. Wisdom cuts through the delusion of our separateness and independence. Wisdom is our soul in touch with the soil through the soles of our feet. Wisdom knows we are one, we are sacred.

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

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

Micah 6 Youth Drop-in Center -
<http://m6sydic.weebly.com/>

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

Church 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

Personals

by Pat Oakes



4/11/16 Mel and Pat Oakes stopped by to say farewell to Doyal and Tommie Pinkard the day before they moved to Brevard, NC

Doyal and **Tommie Pinkard** first came to the Congregational Church of Austin in **1963**--and now, more than 50 years later, they have moved to **Brevard, NC**, to a retirement community named **College Walk** (<http://www.collegewalkretirement.com>). On a road trip last summer, Doyal and Tommie visited Doyal's sister and her husband, **Carol** and **Wes Branning**. They fell in love with the place and quietly decided that they would relocate there. The plan had been to move in March to a cottage there, but due to Doyal's health problems (hospitalized 7 times for different ailments between November and the day before they left) and Tommie's COPD, they instead opted for a large apartment with visiting nurse services daily. Things fell into place when their good neighbor bought their house and Carol and Wes's son-in-law **Pete Thompson** (a certified EMT) offered early on to drive them from Austin to Brevard. The Pinkard's eldest son **Chris** came from California and stepped in to get the house packed up--a major task as Doyal and Tommie had been in the house since 1972. Youngest son **David** came from NYC and volunteered to make the drive with Pete and Doyal and Tommie, acting as the relief driver. So, it was with some trepidation that the foursome set out on **April 12th** for the 2 1/2 day drive to Brevard. In spite of many concerns, they arrived on time, just as the movers arrived with their belongings. One of their regrets at leaving Austin as they did was that there was no opportunity for a farewell send-off from

their much loved friends at church--especially no farewell song authored by **Nodie**. Chris had hoped to bring his parents to church on the 10th, but Doyal was in the hospital. At any rate, they are safely ensconced in their new digs at College Walk, just a block from Carol and Wes. Their new address is **100 N. College Row, Apt. 265, Brevard, NC 28712** and their new phone number is **828-884-8587**. If you missed saying goodbye to them, drop them a note or give them a call.



The "lift boat" that was Gail Christeson's home for her 3 week stay in the Gulf of Mexico

Gail Christeson is spending 3 weeks aboard a "lift boat" offshore of the **Yucatan Peninsula**, drilling into the **Chicxulub Impact Crater**. The lift boat is so named because it raises itself out of the water on stilts to provide a stable platform for drilling. This crater is now widely recognized as the "smoking gun" for the extinction of the dinosaurs about 66 million years ago. It was first discovered in the late 1970s based primarily on gravity data, since it is buried under kilometers of limestone. In the early 1990s, scientists developed the **impact crater hypothesis**, and went looking for possible evidence of a crater that fit their hypothesis. The Chicxulub crater fit the bill, and a lot of research since then has supported that hypothesis. Gail in particular has been a part of two major seismic expeditions to map the deep structure of the crater, in 1996 and 2005. Now they are drilling into the crater to obtain more direct evidence from the rocks themselves.

It was a joy to have **Jaana Rehbein** worshipping with us for most of the month of April. Jaana and her now 5-year-old daughter **Ella** enjoyed their annual trek to Austin from **Frankfurt, Germany**.

It has been wonderful to have **Barbara Johnson** back in our midst on Sundays. Barbara had a stroke in December and has been working very hard to regain her speech and her strength since then. A major goal of hers was to be in church on **Easter Sunday**--and with the help of 40 family members who came from **Houston** and beyond to cheer her on, Barbara was there with her Austin daughter, **Warinda**, and has been present every Sunday since. A number of the 40 family members joined us for worship on Easter. Warinda laughingly reported that they really had a full house with so many in town at once. Warinda and her husband and sons, **Alden** and **William**, at this writing, are looking forward to Barbara's return to their home after a long time in rehab.



4/3/16 Pat Oakes and Barbara Johnson enjoyed comparing rehab stories at church recently.

Retired church office administrator **Kathy Whatley** reports that she and her husband **Danny** have been hiking and taking short jaunts and day trips around Austin and will be going to **New York City** and **Boston** in **June**. Her choir at **All Saints'** will be singing at **St. John the Divine Cathedral** in NYC. It has been a lifelong dream of Kathy's to sing in such a place. We all wish we could be there to hear the wonderful music.



4/3/16 Susan S. Heath and Sara S. Ross--no question that they are sisters!--at coffee hour

Dave and **Sara Ross** enjoyed a visit from her sister **Susan Heath** and husband **Fred**. They came down from **Maine** to check out a time share in **San Antonio** with Susan's twin **Carolyn** from **Pasadena, TX**. Carolyn brought them to Austin, but couldn't stay for church on Sunday, so she missed meeting everyone. Susan and Fred enjoyed singing in the choir, but did their most robust singing (the U of Maine fight song, of course) in the fellowship room with **Beth Gleason**.

Pat and **Mel Oakes** greatly benefited from the visits of her sister Nancy and their daughter Sarah. They were a huge help with Pat's continuing recuperation.

Our amazing **Florence Castle** will turn **100** on **May 13**. She was our church pianist for many, many years—note the plaque on the church piano in her honor. Florence would enjoy a birthday greeting, so do send her a card to **2901 Del Curto Road, Austin, TX 78704-4821**, the home where she has lived since **1940** when she and her late husband **Joe** moved into the stone home which was miles from the center of Austin—and now is quite central.



Heather, Zac, & Abi sightseeing in Zomba, Malawi.



Roger W. Lytle Disc Golf Course, Dallas, TX

Heather Lytle wrote in mid-April from **Malawi**, "Zac, Abi and I will be back in Texas for the second half of June and July so we'll hope to visit Austin during that time and hopefully say hello in person. We honored **Roger's** [their late infant son] life during the past weekend with a day of service at an orphanage near our house using some of the money that was given in his honor (some of which came from the church family there). We have been going to a small home church here with about 7 other expat families, all of whom are the type of people I'd expect to meet at the church in Austin—social justice, service-oriented people who are living quite inspiring lives but are still very humble and down to earth. Three of the families were able to join in our work day at the orphanage which helped us to feel very supported even though we are far from home." If you would like to read the complete letter, email me (oakes@utexas.edu) and I will send you a PDF copy.

Heart of Texas Association News

May

by Liz Nash

Our Heart of Texas Association Spring Meeting, held at Hope United in Georgetown on Sunday, April 3rd, was a joy-filled celebration of our brothers and sisters at Hope United as they formally joined the Heart of Texas Association with full standing. As many of you know, Hope United has been part of us as a new church start for the past five years, with dual affiliation in the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church/Disciples of Christ. Their pastor, Rev. Ron Trimmer, served as pastor of Friedens Church of Washington for several years before following a call to start a new church. From the beginning, Hope has lived its central faith commitments: "Where the Doors are Always Open and the Hearts are Warm with Love," "Less Religion, More Jesus," a substantial commitment to mission as followers of Christ, and an Open and Affirming ministry. Hope hosted a big Association group that filled its inviting space in the Heritage Oaks Community Center.

We also had several items of business at the meeting. A minor amendment to the bylaws passed allowing our Committee on Ministry to send a representative, rather than the chair, to serve on the Association Executive Board. We shared about the new Scholarship Committee that is formulating criteria for awarding our ministerial training scholarships as we expand this to include grants for our licensed ministry candidates. We discussed future possible bylaw revisions to change the composition of our board, possibly going from a system with each church sending a delegate to a smaller board. Another item of discussion was the possibility of having church "clusters" for purposes of hosting meetings. We will be continuing to work on some of these items in our board work, appreciate wider input, and hope to have proposals for the fall meeting.

Some of our most important work, however, was to honor people who have given long, faithful service as officers and to welcome new board and Commit-

tee on Ministry members. We honored Larry Winkelmann of St. John's Burton, long time Brazos Association treasurer and recent Heart of Texas co-treasurer. We also honored Anne Wehrly of Friends Congregational College Station, who has worked hard over the past few years to bring excellent leadership to the Committee on Ministry. We will miss their wisdom and are deeply grateful for their devoted work. We welcomed aboard Janet Sherman, licensed minister at Faith New Braunfels, as Association Vice-Moderator and Hulen Brown of Faith New Braunfels as our secretary. New members of our Committee on Ministry include Hulen Brown; Rev. Dave Phillips, co-pastor of Friedens Geronimo; Cindy Miller (registrar), licensed minister at St. John's Burton; and Jess Wade, lay member from Friends Congregational. We rejoice in the commitment of all of these folks.

Our hearts go out to the family of Rev. Arthur Von Gruenigen, retired UCC member of Bethany UCC in San Antonio, who died April 4th. He was ordained in 1948, served in as a missionary in India and Mexico, and served UCC churches, the last being in El Paso. Art was an active and appreciated member at Bethany His life was celebrated at the church's service on April 17th.

Our hearts also go out to the congregation of Cypress UCC, whose building suffered substantial flood damage in the recent Houston floods. Information about how to help is on the Conference web page at <https://sccucc.org/christ-ucc-cypress-flooded-assistance-needed/>

Blessings in Christ,
Liz Nash
Heart of Texas Association Minister

History Corner

by Pat and Mel Oakes

Another early assistant pastor of the church was **Arthur Desmond Shaw**. He assisted an ailing **Dr. R. J. Briggs** from **September 1, 1919**, to **December 31, 1920**. His salary was \$2000/yr and his appointment was for one year. He had previously served the **First Foreign Church of Hilo, Hawaii**. Shaw, his wife **Isabel** and son **Leslie** left Hilo in **September 1919** for their trip to **Austin**.

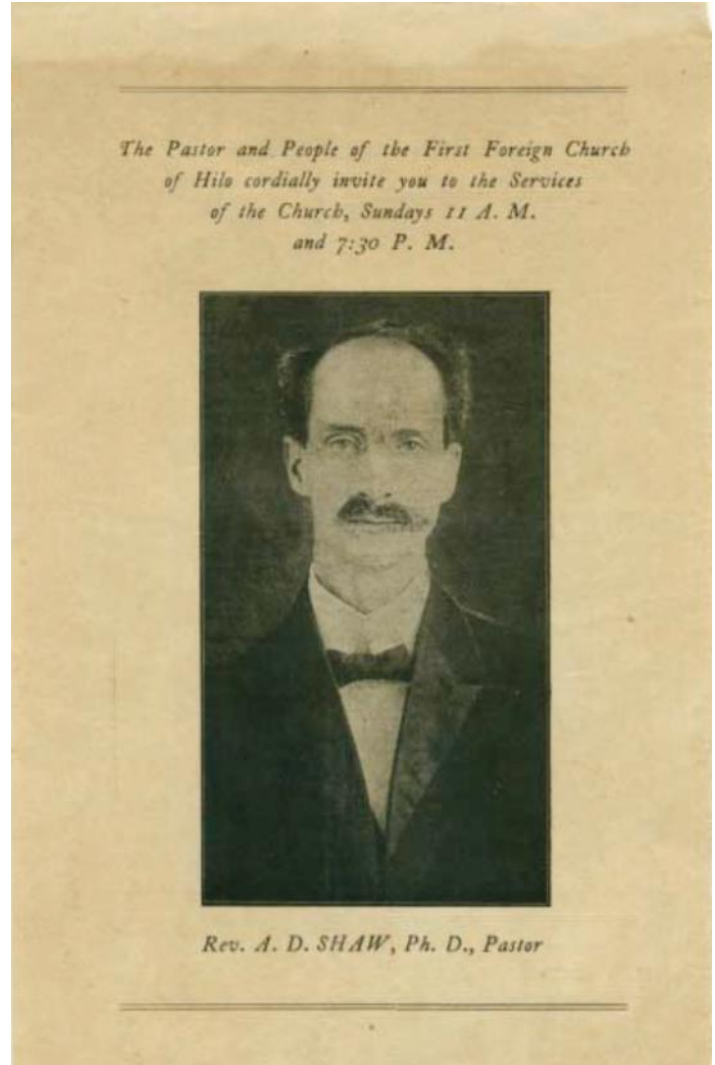
Shaw was born in **Nottingham, England** in **1875**. He was ordained as a **Baptist** in **San Jose, CA**, in **1908**. His pastorates included: **Malden, WA**, 1910-12; **Tacoma, WA**; 1912-16; **Hillsboro, Oregon**, 1917-18; **Hilo, T.H.**, 1918-19; **Austin, TX**, 1919-20; **Lopez, WA**, 1921-22; **Pasco, WA**, 1922-26; and **Cathlamet, WA**, 1929-30. He immigrated from **Linkford(?)**, **England** arriving in **Boston, MA**, on **December 20, 1901**, on the ship, **Saxonia**. The ship's manifest lists his profession as "actor." The earliest U. S. records find him in **New York City** as an **Adjutant** for the **Salvation Army**. He is a popular lecturer in New York and Pennsylvania. In 1906, Shaw gave a lecture on the need to establish "Farm Colonies" to provide support for impoverished immigrants. The talk was entitled "**The Landless Man to the Manless Land.**" An article appeared in the **Tuesday, March 21, 1905**, **New York Times** about his marriage to **Ensign Isabel Crozier of St. Louis**. She was born in **Newcastle-on-Tyne, England**.

Here is a quote from "**The History of Tacoma**, "**The East Congregational Church** erected a new building in **1890**. With the coming of Rev. Dr. A. D. Shaw, an active and able man, this church became a new force in the community and its influence is now city wide." Shaw was minister there from **1912** to **1916**.

On **December 17, 1919**, the Austin church received notice that its request to The **Congregational Home Missionary Society** for \$600 to supplement the minister's salary for the next year had been approved. The society strongly admonished them that they should launch a canvas to raise money for the minister's salary and to contribute to the home missions of the society. This implies that the church was having financial difficulties which

may account for the early departure of Rev. Shaw.

There is more about Reverend Shaw on the **History Site**.



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Return Service Requested

May Visitor Deadline—May 18, 2015