

May 2020

Faith UCC

970 N. Loop 337

New Braunfels, TX 78130

Glimpses of Faith Newsletter

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Recently I was looking at the beautiful oak tree in the playground at church. I noticed that there were quite a few dead branches in the center portion of the tree. This is normal for a tree but it is often hidden by the luxurious leaves on the outside. Years can go by without noticing these dead branches. I brought a saw and started cutting some of these out the other day. There were more than I thought!

This pandemic has revealed some of the dead and dying branches in our society. These were all hidden by the seeming roaring economy we had just 16-8 weeks ago. Back then we had the lowest unemployment rate in decades, but almost 30% of American families had NO savings account! Almost 60% had \$1,000 or less! The stock market was at historic highs but the U.S. government was running a trillion dollar deficit! We have the strongest military in the world that planned for all military contingencies but our health care system and government were not ready for a virus that has killed more people than we lost in the Viet Nam War and the casualties are still climbing. We lived in a celebrity culture that put rock stars and athletes on pedestal and valued stock brokers and bankers more than teachers, truck drivers, grocery store workers and farm workers but now we have come to see how essential these workers are.

Most of us are longing for a return to "normalcy" when we don't have to be social distant, wear a mask, when we can go to restaurants again and weddings and graduations, etc. But maybe, with God's help we can do better than a return to normal. Maybe we can take what we have learned in these last weeks and create a better stronger community.

When God helped the Israelites escape slavery in Egypt the Israelites found themselves free but in a desert wilderness with all the rigors that entails. They found themselves longing for their old lives, for the "fleshpots of Egypt" and "when they ate their fill of bread". Their old way of life looked better than being free and heading to the Promised Land!

God had them wander around the wilderness for 40 years learning how to be a true community and depend on God. Then and only then did they get to enter the Promised Land. Hopefully we won't be wandering 40 years in the wilderness of this pandemic but may God help us to learn the lessons of true community and may our faith in God deepen and may we keep before our eyes the vision of the Promised Land and not our old way of life. Amen.

Our Three High School Graduates at Faith UCC!



Kai is looking forward to graduating, even though it hasn't gone quite as he planned. At present, he is planning on attending Northeast Lakeview in San Antonio to take his introductory college credits, and possibly attending Texas State after that. He is considering a career in physical therapy, but wants to get out in the world and see where life takes him. He recently bought his own small travel trailer so that he can have his own space, while staying on the family property, until he moves on to bigger and better things.

Camdyn is proud to graduate as a Unicorn, just like her Grandpa Martinez. She will be starting at William Edge Institute here in New Braunfels in June to pursue her cosmetology certification.



Elly Beauchamp will be going to UTSA and majoring in Anthropology.

These are our 2020 graduates. If you would like to send them a card or note here are their addresses:

Kai Perry-Clark 28330 Oak Creek Dr. New Braunfels, Tx 78132

Camdyn Martinez 376 Paradise Alley New Braunfels, Tx 78130

Elly Beauchamp 3522 Martesia San Antonio, Tx 78259

Our congratulations to all three of them. God bless them as they move forward in their life journey!



News From Lebanon by Abigail Carroll

It was a joy to be with you in February. On the way back to Lebanon, I attended my next forum theatre training module in Egypt and was offered a spot in a more intensive theatre program. While I'm considering exploring this training after the air travel ban is lifted, for now I am safe, quarantined in Beirut with my four Syrian housemates, making lots of food and speaking lots of Arabic.



The upside of being stuck at home is extra time spent with friends, even if with a rather small group. Last month I started reading the gospel of John with one friend. Last week we did a small Seder then an Easter celebration with some of my Christian and Muslim friends. We included a 'food tour' reading of the resurrection story, enjoying the fish, matzah, fruit, and wine that Jesus would have during Holy Week and after his resurrection. It was a fun experience!

It's exciting to be at a point where, by God's grace, my cultural understanding and linguistic skills allow me to more regularly share the gospel and resurrection story in a way that actually sounds like good news to people who have been deeply hurt by religion. Oftentimes I notice that I'm watering spiritual seeds that were planted long before me, praying that God causes healthy growth. May the good news of Christ with us, for us, in us, and reconciling us—to God and each other—yield good fruit in each of our lives and relationships.

May Birthdays

5-4 Sheri Haynes

5-4 Charles Stark

5-11 Kelvin Kramm

5-12 Nicolle Perry-Clark

5-13 Kathleen Hoffmann

5-17 Tim Marlow

5-23 Kathy Leber

5-24 Sheila Angerer

5-24 Jena Wendel

5-27 Lee Zillmann



Faith UCC to Receive PPP Funds

Faith UCC will be receiving \$13,400 from the Federal Payroll Protection Plan Funds. 75% must be used for salaries and 25% can be used for utilities. A number of our other UCC churches in the conference also applied for and will be receiving these funds. Slumber Falls Camp also applied for and has received these funds. Our thanks to Council President Mike Ziegler for doggedly working through the bureaucratic maze to make it possible for us to receive these funds!

50th Anniversary of Earth Day Tree Planting



The Gossett Family came out to Slumber Falls and helped plant the three trees. To dig a hole they had to use a



pneumatic drill! They also had the biggest tree which means they need the biggest hole! A number of you came out to help plant the tree at the church in memory of Ken Triesch.



Our thanks to Jeremy Albers for picking up the trees and inviting us out to the camp! He, Benjamin and Pastor Scott got in on the tree planting as well. We had a perfect day and it was good to get out of the house and get outside. (These pictures were taken by Sheila Angerer)

An Easy Way to Help Faith UCC and the Work We Do in the Community and Beyond

As you know we now have a bank next door to us, Tex Star. They have what they call a Covenant Program which helps churches, church schools and faith-based programs. Any church member who places a personal or business account in Tex Star can join the program and receive a special package of services, like free checking. At the end of the year the bank will add up all the deposits the church and members have in their bank and GIVE the church a small percentage of the deposit total! This doesn't cost you anything! The bank created this program as a community service to support faith based organizations.

They can also set up an electronic tithing program or giving through credit cards.

Thanks to All of YOU Who Are Zooming In For Worship!

Thanks to all of you who have been worshipping with us through zoom! I look forward to hopefully someday soon being able to worship together in person, but we are not there yet. The conference suggest " **In light of the recommendations from public-health officials, the South Central Conference of the United Church of Christ joins our ecumenical partners in calling for our churches to continue offering only online worship and study opportunities through the month of May**" We will reevaluate where we are at then.

National UCC Strengthen the Church Offering

Please join us in common mission, vision, and purpose by taking up the Strengthen the Church offering on May 31, 2020

We are amid a crisis that is demanding that we remain physically distant at a time when so many need the love and hope of a strong church to walk with them through an extraordinary global emergency. As many of us now present our ministry online, we pray that our love is being felt across technology, reaching those who need us most. Being church in new ways has demanded much of us as we have faced this challenging time together.

As we continue to explore new ways to be the church that people want in this time, your support of the Strengthen the Church offering on May 31 is now needed more than ever. The Strengthen the Church offering builds up the United Church of Christ by providing the financial resources to be a Spirit-inspired and world-changing Christian movement. Funding supports leadership development, new churches, youth ministry, and innovation; all strategies needed as we work through this current challenge and beyond. Conferences and the National Setting equally share the gifts given by members and friends through their local congregations.

The Strengthen the Church offering ensures, together, we grow stronger

Strengthen the Church funds ministry that allows us to benefit from best practices, insights, and innovations across the life of the UCC. Because of your support, new churches emerge, congregations are revitalized, and leadership skills are enhanced. Many new and revitalized churches are leading the way now as we adapt to new technology in all our congregations.

Please continue to help the United Church of Christ expand its light by taking up the Strengthen the Church offering on May 31, 2020

Materials for the offering have been mailed to churches. If you have not received your supply or need additional materials, visit UCC Resources at www.uccresources.com. Recognizing that many churches are not meeting in person, we are providing a number of digital resources online. Visit ucc.org/stc for downloadable material.

Thank you for your continued support of your local Conference, the National Setting, and our work together to build the Body of Christ. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Jacqueline Owen, Development Strategist, at owenj@ucc.org or 216-736-2169.

Blessings,

Rev. Traci D. Blackmon
Associate General Minister
Justice & Local Church Ministries



Heart of Texas Association News

As announced earlier, the Heart of Texas Association will be meeting via Zoom on Saturday morning, May 16th. Sign-in begins at 10 am, the meeting begins at 10:30, and we intend to be done at noon or a little after. We will have some extra security in place with a way to sign up to attend through a website link in order to prevent “Zoom bombing” harassment. You will need to sign up to attend in advance so we have the list of people coming, and then you will get the meeting Zoom link. (Sounds complicated but it is easy.) If you do not know how to use Zoom, please email me (lizknash@gmail.com) before the meeting date so we can help you know what to do or have a friend walk you through it. As primary agenda items, we will be having the Ecclesiastical Councils of Kerry Kirtley and Arlene Turner whose ordination papers are already available on our Association website, <http://hotaucc.org/>. We believe it will be more important than ever to for our churches to speak about their lives together in this challenging time as we share ideas and lift one another up. We will be posting all of the documents for the meeting, including the agenda, financial report, past minutes, and any other written reports on the Association website, and we ask that you download those and read through them before the meeting. (It is harder to read them during the meeting while you are on Zoom.)

The South Central Conference Annual meeting will happen online on Saturday, June 13th in order to do the business of the Conference. The SCC will be sending out information on how this will work. Major items on the agenda will include voting on bylaw changes (posted on our Association website); meeting our new Consulting Conference Minister, Rev. Dr. Campbell Lovett; elections; budget approval; and perhaps more that I am not presently aware of. Campbell Lovett has already been working with many of us with his wise and caring counsel, helping bring resources on applying for CARES Act money and fundraising to our churches, as well as beginning to be a pastor to us, in this difficult time.

Our Committee on Ministry met by Zoom for the first time during March. The Committee **interviewed Kerry Kirtley and Arlene Turner, recommending them for ordination** and, as it turns out, giving them a good rehearsal for their online Ecclesiastical Councils. The Committee also voted to license Brett Hart, who is a member of St. Peter’s Coupland and is serving as their minister while Martin Garrison is on sabbatical. Brett has come to the UCC with about 30 years of ministry experience and a similar amount of experience as a high school science teacher. He left his last church position to begin the Serene Disciple Project at the home he shares with his wife at Egret Isle Farm near Coupland. The Serene Disciple project continues, and you can learn about this unique ministry at <https://egretislefarm.com/about-us/>. We welcome Brett!

As I close, I lift up our churches, ministers, and all who are working in creative and challenging ways to do ministry now. Let’s continue to pray for each other and support each other. I also lift up a giving opportunity. The Christmas Fund, run by the Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ, is now responding to many requests for emergency help for pastors and church staff. If you would like to know more or donate, go to <https://www.pbucc.org/index.php/art-ma-landing/opportunities-for-giving>.

Blessings in Christ, Liz Nash, Association Minister