

Brazos Association News

The first piece of news I have to report this month is one of sadness at a church leaving us. In February, St. John's Evangelical Lutheran, Richland, voted to leave the United Church of Christ pending a future vote requiring a 2/3 majority on denominational affiliation with either the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) or the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LC-MS). St. John's remains in the Brazos Association of the UCC until there is a 2/3 vote on affiliation. The church anticipates meeting to vote in March to resolve this issue. Currently, the church is in an interim period after former pastor Rev. Michael Vaughn accepted a call to the UCC church in Clifton early last fall. At that point, St. John's decided to explore denominational affiliation with the understandable intent of resolving this issue before searching for a pastor. Our Conference Minister, Douglas Anders, and I visited with their search and denominational affiliation committees last fall, and Brazos Association Moderator Rev. Tim Tutt and I led a discussion with the church about the UCC in January. They have also had similar forums with representatives from the two Lutheran denominations. We anticipate they will make a decision soon, and we ask God's blessing on their ministry as they discern their calling as a church, search for a new pastor, and go forward in their ministry. We are grateful for their many years in the UCC, and we are grateful for the steady guidance of their current interim minister, Rev. Elroy Haverlah, a recently retired ELCA minister who has worked faithfully with the church and with us on this issue. We will miss them.

I also report with joy that representatives from the Brazos Association recently met with the pastors of a new church start already in progress in Austin. This church is very interested in becoming part of the UCC, and we are going forward with plans to meet with church representatives. We anticipate that they will attend our spring Brazos Association. More news will be coming as we continue with this process.

Remember that all are invited to our *Brazos Association meeting on Sunday, April 26, 3 pm, at United Christian Church in Austin (near Parmer Lane and MoPac)*. The theme of the meeting will be the exciting mission activities of our churches and mission opportunities for us as we seek to serve in the name of Christ. Dinner will follow. Look for information about the meeting and the dinner at your church. Remember, too, that our *South Central Conference Annual Meeting* is being hosted by the Brazos Association in Austin, June 5-7, at *Huston-Tillotson University*. Come to hear there about the mission of the UCC as members of the UCC-Disciples Global Missions team will be with us to preach, speak, host workshops, and host a pre-meeting gathering to train church members to share about the global mission of the UCC. Look for registration information at your church or on the SCC website.

Blessings in Christ, Liz Nash, Brazos Association Minister