

Brazos Association News

On Saturday, April 26, United Christian Church hosted our Association Spring Meeting. We were blessed by the presence of Rev Tom Neilsen of Floresville (outside San Antonio), who shared with us about the mission trips he has led over several years partnering with a church group working in Alegria, El Salvador to build homes and other facilities. Tom shared with us that the relationships built between the people there and the US people visiting, even more than the physical work, are at the heart of the experience there, leading to profound insights and change in our Christian discipleship. Tom was the pastor for many years of Swiss United Church of Christ in the Wisconsin Conference, and led a partnership there between the conference and the El Salvador ministry. He is seeking to lead our conference toward a similar partnership. Folks from several other Association churches shared about their mission work, including the St. John's Burton trip to Chiapas, the United Christian trip to Ecuador (through Global Ministries of the UCC/Disciples of Christ), Friends Congregational's hosting of homeless people through Family Promise, and the joint Disciples/UCC summer mission trip for the Austin area churches. (I may have left someone out. Let me know if I have and I will put yours in next time so we can share our work and ideas.) In addition, Tom Vandestadt told us about the current work of Back Bay Mission, Charles Stark shared about opportunities at Slumber Falls camp, and I told people how to connect with the UCC hurricane rebuilding work in New Orleans along with other rebuilding opportunities near Galveston. Thanks to United Christian for providing a great welcome and dinner!

We have news, too, about a new church start and a church in transition. Rev. Ron Trimmer has resigned as pastor of Friedens UCC in Washington. His new call is to be the pastor of a UCC/Disciples new church start in Georgetown. Ron's last Sunday in Washington will be July 12. Our prayers are with the Trimmer family as they go in faith on this exciting and risky adventure in discipleship, and our prayers are with Friedens as they say farewell to the Trimmers and begin an interim period. This will be the third new church start in our Association, joining with St. Thomas who is now a Community in Connection with our conference (the first designated step in becoming a new church start), and Creative Spirit. For those of you who are still receiving the Strengthen the Church offerings, remember that half of this offering stays in the conference for the vital work these new churches are doing. Our prayers are with them!

Finally, thanks go to Cheryl von Ehrenkrook of Ft. Worth, who just led an outstanding workshop on "Dealing with Difficult Members" at St. John's Burton for our licensed and ordained ministers. Cheryl is a certified conflict resolution specialist, an attorney who served as an Air Force JAG lawyer, and a graduate of Brite Divinity School.

We look forward to seeing many of you at the South Central Conference Annual Meeting at Huston-Tillotson University on June 5-7 and at the Mission Education Event at United Christian on June 5.

Blessings in Christ, Liz Nash, Brazos Association Minister