



# the epistle

Friends Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ



A LETTER FROM REV.  
NIKKI STAHL

CELEBRATING  
SOLAR

TRANSGENDER DAY  
OF REMEMBRANCE

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# CAMERAROLL

## The Big Gay 5K and BBQ

Friends members enjoyed a beautiful day honoring and celebrating our LGBTQIA+ members and neighbors with the Pride Community Center:



It is a merry Christmas and a happy holiday season here at Friends! This year, the congregation has done much to further the mission of the church.

In this seasonal issue of the Epistle, you will find more about some of the goings-on in the life of Friends as we head into a new year.

First, please enjoy a hello from the new association minister for the United Church of Christ's Heart of Texas Association, to which Friends Church belongs:



Greetings! My name is Rev. Nikki Stahl. Starting on November 1st, I'm your new Heart of Texas Association Minister. Before I tell you more about me, let me say what an important pastor, mentor, and friend Rev. Liz Nash has been for me. Over the last few weeks, I've been able to hear many of you share how important that she has been to you. Again, many thanks to Rev. Liz Nash! Liz, thank you for your ministry and all the ways in which our lives have been blessed and enhanced by it. Now, go enjoy those grandbabies!!

There is a lot that I can share about me so I will just hit the highlights. I was born and raised in Austin. Grew up Southern Baptist. I have a bachelor degree in Finance from UT of Austin, a masters of Social Work and a masters of Divinity from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. I've held several "jobs" prior to seminary including Workers Compensation Underwriter, 3M Plant and Operational Accountant, and Business Analyst.

I served at United Christian Church of Austin from 2011 until earlier this year as Associate, Executive, and then Co-Pastor. I've worked with some amazing pastors at United including Rev. Tim Tutt, Rev. Ken White, Rev. John Gage, and Rev. Anna Kreisle. I have learned so much from each of them.

Over the years I have been active in the Association by participating on the Executive Committee, and Scholarship Committee and mentoring members in discernment. I have also served on the Camp Council at Slumber Falls.

The past few years my focus has been at the Conference level where I served on the Board of Directors for five years including the last two as President (term ended June 2021). I'm currently overseeing the newly formed Communities in Practice groups.

I've been married to my husband, Ian, for 15 years. We have three daughters: Marian (14), Emmalee (10), and Cora (8). We stay busy with church, school, piano, dance and marching band (Marian plays vibraphone in the pit!). My mother, Lee, and her dog (Blue) live with us along with our three cats (Lola, Henri and Precious). In July we added a new puppy - BB Grace!

That's just a bit about me. I look forward to learning more about you and your congregations! If there is something going on in your congregation, please let me know! If possible, I would love to be there!\*\*\* I want to get to know you!

I can be reached at [revnikkistahl@gmail.com](mailto:revnikkistahl@gmail.com) and my cell number is 512-751-3557. I'm also on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/togetherwithyouonthejourney>.

The Heart of Texas Association is full of amazing churches, doing amazing things in their communities. I am honored to be a part of your work even if it is just in little ways.

With you on the Journey,  
Rev. Nikki Stahl  
Association Minister (elect)

\*\*\*Until my youngest two can be fully vaccinated for COVID, I will not be able to attend inside gatherings where people are unmasked. I am available for outside gatherings, zoom calls, email, texts or phone calls.

# LETTER OF THANKS FROM THE BRAZOS VALLEY FOOD BANK

Dear Dan and Friends Congregational Church:

Thank you for your generous gift of \$500.00 to the Brazos Valley Food Bank on 7/15/2021. We greatly appreciate your generosity.

We realize that you have many choices when deciding how and where to make your charitable contributions. Please know that we value your support of the Brazos Valley Food Bank and the vital anti-hunger work that we do.

Food is a basic right of every human being. Your gift makes it possible to collect and acquire nutritious food, distribute it through our partners and programs, and ensure it reaches hungry children, hardworking families, the disabled and seniors of fixed incomes throughout the Brazos Valley. Together, with your support, the Brazos Valley Food Bank is nourishing neighbors in need every day—because no one should ever go hungry.

It is a privilege and an honor to be chosen as a recipient of your generous donation.

Many thanks,

Theresa E. Mangapora, MSW  
Executive Director, Brazos Valley Food  
Bank



BRAZOS VALLEY  
**foodbank**

# CELEBRATING SOLAR

Friends Church's photovoltaic (PV) system is now fully paid for! That means Southwood Solar is out of the picture, and the system is running well.

From John Maxwell:

Cumulative benefit so far:

- 110,000 kWh generated
- 100+ tons of CO2 emissions reduction (based on Gibbons Creek coal)
- \$13,000 retail electricity value (Friends has pocketed less because we don't get full retail credit when we're generating more than we need)
- Ongoing displacement of 100% of the electricity needs for about 3 homes



From local news outlet KBTX:

# BCS groups come together to honor violence victims for Transgender Day of Remembrance

By Andy Krauss, KBTX

COLLEGE STATION, Texas (KBTX) - The Pride Community Center and Friends Congregational Church held a vigil Wednesday evening recognizing the 2021 Transgender Day of Remembrance.

Members of the BCS community came out to honor those who were killed due to anti-transgender violence over the past year. According to the Pride Community Center, there have been seven of those deaths in Texas, 69 in the United States, and 460 internationally this year alone.

Many of those who showed up spoke to tell their own stories and say the names of those that were lost who were either special or left an impression on them.

The worldwide day of remembrance is held on Nov. 20 every year.

Katrina Stewart is the executive director of the Pride Community Center. "These sort of crimes, these sort of things that happen, don't just target transgender people. They often target people who are assumed to be transgender as well, who are visited violence upon just because their gender identity or expression is out of what some people would consider normal or the way things should be, and yet they're killed for it," Stewart said. "Too many times, it's people of color who end up being the victims."

Stewart says tonight's gathering gives her optimism about the future. She says she's seen the way in which people are more receptive to information about gender identity and expression not just here locally, but throughout the state and country as well.

"It gives me hope. It gives me a lot of hope, and in that hope is the seed of what we can do so that this is lessened in the future," Stewart said. "So far, what we've seen is that the deaths increase year after year. I'm hoping we can come to a point where we start seeing a lessening of that."

Stewart says they hope to accomplish three things by gathering every year - saying and honoring the names, raising awareness, and driving a call to action.

"A lot of what we've done is education. More and more people know about it. More and more people realize the horror that it is," Stewart said. "I end up doing presentations more and more to organizations and individuals in Bryan-College Station about transgender people, which tells me we are raising awareness, and the special needs because of how they are targeted are important for us all to look at."

Stewart says she encourages anyone who wants more information to Google Transgender Day of Remembrance to get more perspective on its cause.



**2021 Brazos Valley  
Transgender Day of  
Remembrance**

at Friends Congregational Church, UCC

Presented by  **PRIDE**  
community center

November 17th, 2021  
6-8 PM  
2200 Southwood Drive  
College Station

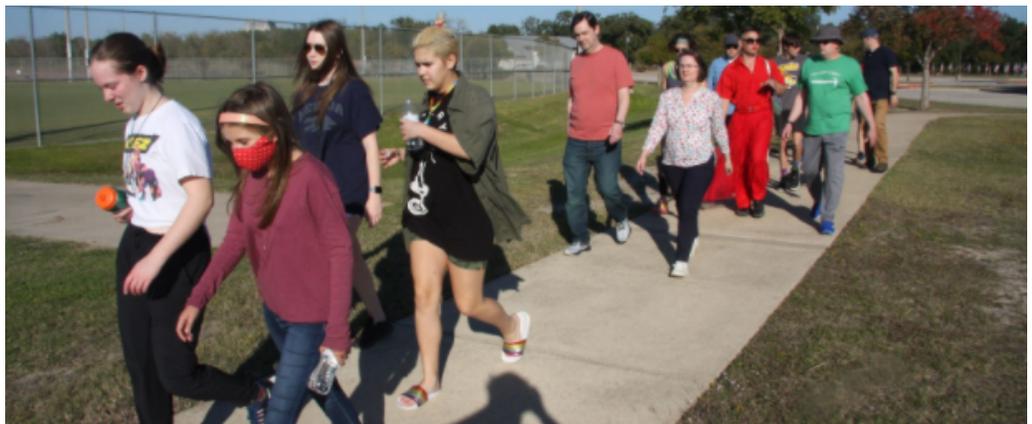
Co-hosted by:



As usual, the CROP Hunger Walk was a time of fellowship and mission work for Friends youth and the wider congregation.

The CROP Hunger Walk is a nationwide movement sponsored by Church World Service to raise funds to end hunger and poverty in the U.S. and around the world. Hundreds of religious groups, businesses, schools and others organize local Walk events in their communities each year, while others join the National Walk and choose their own location and experience.

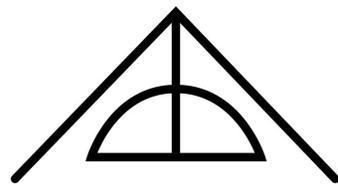
The Friends team joined nearly 14,000 people nationwide to raise almost \$3.5 million for this cause.





**And to cap it all off, Advent and Christmas are here. See you at the sanctuary—and again in 2022!**





**FRIENDS**  
CONGREGATIONAL  
**CHURCH**  
*United Church of Christ*

Our next issue is coming your way October 2022! If your ministry is holding an event that you would like to see covered in the Fall issue, reach out to [laurenvasselli@gmail.com](mailto:laurenvasselli@gmail.com) with pictures and details!

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