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Rev. Dr. Dan DeLeon

This pandemic is isolating, but it cannot separate us from the love of God that we know in Christ Jesus.

For more than seven months we have gathered online not only for Sunday services streamed on our website, Facebook and YouTube, but for Sunday School classes, youth group, Wednesday evening prayer and communion services, and Noonday Check-in and Prayer Times on zoom every Monday and Friday.

The noon check-ins give us a chance to see and hear from each other, and to lift one another up in prayer. We catch up. We laugh. We lament. Sometimes we struggle with glitchy internet. Sometimes tears flow. But we always depart with blurred waves, smiling faces, and a solidified reminder that we are loved, necessary, and not alone.

In a recent Noonday Check-in, one of us shared about episodes of childhood trauma resurfacing in their lives due to an upcoming family event. They requested prayer for protection against wounds being reopened and deep pain being unjustly revisited. If we had been physically gathered for prayers and a transparent concern like that were spoken, we might lay hands on the one requesting prayer, literally touching them with comfort and love. In the absence of human touch, I suggested that we unmute ourselves and reach out.

**"You don't deserve to feel the way you're feeling."**

**"I've got your back. If you need some courage to speak for yourself when the time comes, I'm here."**

**"Having suffered abuse myself, my heart goes out to you. There is nothing about you that caused what happened to you, and there is everything about you to keep that abuse from causing you harm ever again."**

**"Don't be afraid to take care of yourself. That's the most important thing in what you're dealing with."**

**"We love you. We love you. We love you."**

Each spoken affirmation was a hand reaching out to touch one of God's beloved in prayerful support. And we all felt it. After a brief silence, I said the only thing that came mind, a thought that was pouring out of me like an overflowing cup: "We just had church!"

In the pages of this second edition of the new quarterly offering from Friends Church, The Epistle, you will read about how a pandemic isn't preventing us from embodying the love of God through acts of servanthood and social justice. You will also read about how the spiritual life of our faith community is being challenged, but not left wanting despite these difficult days. We may be physically isolated, but we are consistently, relentlessly pushing through the barriers of COVID-19 to reach one another with holy love that always heals, always strengthens, always saves, and always sustains our lives. For I am convinced that nothing—not a pandemic or physical isolation, nor past abuses inflicted on us or present triggers of trauma, nor heavy depression or mental health struggles, nor anxiety or worries of any kind—can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## CAMERAROLL



## from the desk of pastor trent

Friends,

These last seven months have been extraordinary for many reasons, but the dedication and compassion of this faith community during that time has been one of the most amazing and heartening things for this pastor to witness. I was so grateful to be able to spend some time together in person last month, and although we're still a ways off from resuming our regular gatherings, the joy and anticipation of that moment has helped to keep me going. Truly, we have put down some strong and deep roots in the love of God during these days.

As we look ahead to next year and all the challenges and opportunities it will bring, I want to challenge all of us to begin envisioning how we can grow from these solid roots in new ways; how we can reimagine what it means to be church and to reach even more people with the good news that they are loved and welcomed and needed. As we consider how we'll pledge, what ministries we'll take part in, how we can share our talents and time, may we all know that we are rooted and grounded deep in the soil of God's Kin-dom: a place of refuge and safety, a place of peace and compassion, a place of abundance and joy. Know that you are loved, and you are needed.

Grace and peace,  
Pastor Trent



# A GRATEFUL SPIRIT

Thanks and shout outs from our Friends

*Beloved Friends,  
I am continually blessed by the support of our community. Thank you for always walking beside my journey through seminary, for lifting me up in difficult times, for making me laugh, for joining me at the table. I love you. ♥ Brooke*

Brooke Dooley

I don't know who to tell, but we are very thankful for the snack bags from the church! Since I am new here I don't have my snack stash built up in my room yet, and that was a great start to my secret stash.

-Abby Burley,  
Crockett Elementary

During the October congregational meeting, Church Council presented the Draft 2021 Dream Budget, otherwise known as the Statement of Faith. Church leaders thoughtfully considered their budget requests, anticipating that COVID-19 and its accompanying hardships may continue into the foreseeable future. Ultimately, the proposed dream budget represents a 4.4% increase from the 2020 Budget, which is an optimistic vision for the future.

As we strive to meet the 2021 Dream Budget through our annual stewardship campaign, Rooted in Love, I've been reflecting on Friend's core values of Spirituality, Inclusivity & Affirmation, Community, Justice, and Stewardship. In particular, I wonder how we, as a faith community, are living these values today and how we might tangibly bring them to life in the days ahead. In this election season, considering how our congregational values align with those of our local, state, and federal elected leaders is a crucial way we can do just that. Please vote both your values and heart on November 3rd!

As we prepare for new beginnings, may those truly be rooted in love. Love for one another, our church family, and our neighbors outside these limitless walls we call home.

## A NOTE FROM THE MODERATOR



Kelly Wellman



# Together At Last!

## (just six feet apart)

Earlier this month, Friends Congregational Church held our first in-person worship service since March 15th. Our community of faith gathered in front of the church building on October 4th for our first ever socially distanced outdoor service.

Two more outdoor worship services have been planned for **Sunday, November 1st** and **Sunday, December 6th** at 9:00 am. Masks and social distancing will be required at both services for the safety of all.

All are welcome. See you at church!

# Election Day is November 3rd.

**Take 1 of these 7 acceptable forms of ID to the ballot when you vote.**



Texas Driver License\*



Texas Handgun License\*



Texas Election ID Certificate\*



U.S. Citizenship Certificate with Photo



Texas Personal ID Card\*



U.S. Military ID Card with Photo\*



U.S. Passport\* (Book or Card)

For voters aged 18-69, your photo ID can be expired up to four years. For voters aged 70 and older, your photo ID can be expired for any length of time if otherwise valid.

Learn more at:  
**[votetexas.gov](http://votetexas.gov)**

**If you do not possess and cannot obtain one of the forms of photo ID, you may qualify for a Reasonable Impediment Declaration by showing one of the following supporting forms of identification at the poll:**

- Certified Domestic Birth Certificate
- Current Utility Bill
- Bank Statement
- Government Check
- Paycheck
- Government document with your name and address
- Your Voter Registration Card

# Make a plan **today.**

# Vote on **Tuesday.**

## There are 25 open polling locations in Brazos County.

- Millican Community Center
  - 22284 Pierce Street, Millican, TX
- College Station Meeting and Training Facility
  - 1603 Graham Road, College Station, TX
- Galilee Baptist Church
  - 804 N. Logan, Bryan, TX
- Zion Church of Kurten
  - 97 N. FM 2038, Kurten, TX
- Parkway Baptist Church
  - 1501 Southwest Pkwy, College Station, TX
- College Heights Assembly of God
  - 4100 Old College Rd., Bryan, TX
- First Baptist Church - Bryan
  - 3100 Cambridge Dr., Bryan, TX
- Bryan Ballroom
  - 701 Palasota Dr., Bryan, TX
- Brazos County Administration Building
  - 200 S. Texas Ave, Bryan, TX
- Rudder Tower - Rudder Exhibit Hall
  - Texas A&M Campus - 401 Joe Routt Blvd
- GW Williams Tabernacle
  - 311 Waco St/1216 Eureka St, Bryan, TX
- Texas A&M College of Medicine
  - 8447 Riverside Pkwy, Bryan, TX
- Lincoln Center
  - 1000 Eleanor, College Station, TX
- College Station City Hall
  - 1101 Texas Ave, College Station, TX
- College Station ISD Admin Building
  - 1812 Welsh, College Station, TX
- Fellowship Freewill Baptist Church
  - 1228 W. Villa Maria Rd, Bryan, TX
- Castle Heights Baptist Church
  - 4504 E. Hwy 21, Bryan, TX
- A&M Church of Christ
  - 2475 Earl Rudder Frwy, College Station, TX
- Christ United Methodist Church
  - 4201 State Hwy 6, South, College Station, TX
- Arena Hall
  - 2906 Tabor Rd, Bryan, TX
- Brazos Center
  - 3232 Briarcrest Dr, Bryan, TX
- Wellborn Community Center
  - 4119 W. Greens Prairie Rd, Wellborn, TX
- Living Hope Baptist Church
  - 4170 State Hwy 6, South, College Station, TX
- Church of the Nazarene
  - 2122 E. William J. Bryan Pkwy, Bryan, TX
- Beacon Baptist Church
  - 2001 East Villa Maria Rd, Bryan, TX

For a more information, visit [brazosvotes.org](https://brazosvotes.org)

## Remember! In Texas, you have the right to:

- A ballot with written instructions on how to cast a ballot
- Ask the polling place for instruction on how to cast a ballot
- Cast your vote in secret and free from intimidation
- Cast a provisional ballot if your name does not appear on the list of registered voters
- Report a possible voting rights abuse to the Secretary of State (1-800-252-8683)

# LEARNING TO LISTEN

SETTING NORMS TO FOSTER INCLUSIVE DISCUSSION  
WITH THE SOCIAL JUSTICE CLASS

## Join the conversation!

The Social Justice Class will meet on Zoom on  
November 8, 15, and 22 at 9:30.

For more info on our current curriculum, see  
<http://privilege.uccpages.org>

Questions? Email Jackie Womack at  
[jackiejwomack@gmail.com](mailto:jackiejwomack@gmail.com)  
for more information.

Zoom Meeting ID: 839 0495 8811  
Passcode: AllFriends



### By Jackie Womack

In the Social Justice class, we are studying a new curriculum “White Privilege: Let’s Talk”. It calls for beginning each lesson with an icebreaker -- a silly question that gets us talking before we tackle some sensitive and challenging conversations about race and racism. In the first week, the question was “what is your favorite road sign and why?”

The class had fun as we answered, and it

allowed us to get to know each other better. More than one person shared a funny or interesting sign from overseas. One person likes the animal crossing signs she sees in rural areas. Another appreciates the warning of curves in the road coming up. I shared that I like the lane options signs that hang on stoplights, especially when the sign indicates I can turn left, go straight, or turn right -- I want all my options open as I sit at the red light. Someone said she likes a stop sign because she needs the reminder to stop, take a minute, and breathe.

The last person to share revealed her favorite sign, the yield. It is good to be reminded to think about other people, she said, to look for someone else and to let them go first.

Our group liked this one so much that it became part of our group covenant -- the norms we will use as we continue our conversations over the next few weeks. "Remember the yield sign -- be aware of when to stop and when to start" is the way the group worded that one.

In fact, the yield sign influences much of the group norms in the Social Justice Class. Once we had brainstormed all the ways we hoped to handle ourselves as a group, our list ended up looking like this:

#### For how I treat myself:

- Approach topics with the goal to learn.
- Practice humility, honesty, and keeping an open mind.
- "Yield" sign--be aware of when to go and when to stop.
- Expect and accept non closure.
- Don't let the fear of making mistakes get in the way of growth.
- Don't be afraid of silence.
- Try to keep ourselves looking forward and attending to how we can change.
- "Oops" rule -- you have permission to start over when you are talking.

## WHITE PRIVILEGE

let's talk



#### For how I treat others:

- Be brave and kind and respectful (we will discuss challenging topics; we are all trying to see our blind spots--do not be afraid to challenge but do so in a respectful manner).
- Be willing to validate people's perspectives.
- Be cognizant of the various backgrounds of one another.
- Listen to understand, not to reply -- Listen attentively and carefully.
- Don't interrupt.
- Don't assume understanding; ask clarifying questions.
- "Ouch" rule -- be willing to confront potential conflict in the moment if something is said that is hurtful or confusing.

#### Most Importantly:

- Above all, we are Friends.

As we continue to study together, we learn to yield, which opens our hearts to the experiences and wisdom of others. We become teachable as we realize all the things we don't know. Yielding isn't easy and takes practice, especially when we're challenged to confront our own bias or ignorance. We yield, and in the process, we "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Consider joining us on a Sunday -- the odds are pretty good that you have a perspective we need as we learn and grow together.

# BI Brazos Interfaith IN Immigration Network

BIIN's mission is to promote the human dignity and well-being of all immigrants in our community and to advocate for and facilitate better access to legal, educational and social services.

## -BIIN Mission Statement

The Brazos interfaith Immigration Network has been operating in the Bryan-College Station area since 2009. As of the 2010 census, nearly a quarter of the Brazos Valley's population is Hispanic, and a significant percentage of that population speaks English less than "very well." BIIN provides services to help Spanish-speaking residents of the Brazos Valley overcome language barriers with respect to:

- Understanding and negotiating legal documents
- Accessing healthcare
- Communicating with schools
- Recovering wages
- Understanding their rights
- Dealing with domestic violence
- Accessing assistance resources



In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, BIIN has pivoted to offer many of their services online. Historically, their Information, Referrals, and Assistance Program (IRA Program) has served community members on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, but now community members reach out online and are connected with volunteers who follow up directly with them via text message or phone call.

In April and May, citizenship classes were held over Facebook Live, allowing volunteers to show flash cards via the video feed while receiving responses from class members through Facebook's chat feature.

BIIN volunteers have also organized weekly English conversation circles on Zoom. Volunteers and adult English Language Learners meet online every Wednesday to practice their English conversation skills through a set of guided questions about daily-life activities.

# Volunteer Opportunities

There are so many ways to serve your community with BIIN. To apply to volunteer, check out [brazosimmigration.com/volunteer!](https://brazosimmigration.com/volunteer/)

## Citizenship Class Volunteer Roles:

- Office Work: BIIN seeks engaged volunteers to help systematize our citizenship class records. In order to secure funding and ensure that we are doing the best we can to prep our students for their citizenship exams, volunteers contact past students to check up on their naturalization process.
  - Qualifications: Spanish fluency
- Teaching Assistant: BIIN seeks engaged volunteers to help tutor and prepare students for their naturalization exam. Classes are offered in both English and Spanish. Volunteer in a dynamic environment and help gear instruction towards students on a one-to-one basis tailored to their particular needs. Work is rewarding.
  - Qualifications: Bilingual (if interested in Spanish classes) and a bright attitude
- Teacher: BIIN seeks engaged volunteers to lead classroom instruction in our citizenship classes. Classes are offered in both English and Spanish. Volunteers work in a dynamic environment teaching civics and U.S. history to immigrants. Work with BIIN for a rewarding experience and help be an important part of our students' citizenship journey.
  - Qualifications: Bilingual (if interested in Spanish classes) and a bright attitude

## IRA (Information, Referrals, and Assistance) Volunteer

- Our Information, Referral, and Assistance (IRA) program is at the core of what BIIN stands for. On Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday afternoons we host walk-in hours with trained volunteers who can help connect immigrants to whatever services they are looking for. Cases are varied and can include: translation and interpretation, legal assistance, discrimination, and work issues. Volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds and receive training.
  - Qualifications: 9 month commitment volunteering at least three times a month. Spanish proficiency is necessary, although translation services can be provided in the case of volunteers with needed skills (law, social services, etc).

## Office Help

- BIIN has new office projects daily and seeks volunteers to help out. The office environment is dynamic and our needs are constantly changing. Examples of projects may include: put together event boxes, search for social media content, organize the office, file documents, make copies, fold brochures, run errands, data entry, assist with volunteer orientations and/or interviews, proofread documents, make reminder phone calls to volunteers, general research etc.
  - Qualifications: Detail oriented and willingness to assist in whatever task needs to be accomplished the day you volunteer. Have a positive attitude and commitment to immigration issues.

## Outreach

- BIIN seeks volunteers to help with Our Know Your Rights presentations. We go to local immigrant communities and help them understand their legal rights: family security in the case of ICE questioning, their rights under deportation, and other legal barriers. Ideally, there are three to four volunteers for each presentation. One volunteer to present the powerpoint slides (must be bilingual for the job), one volunteer manage the projector and one or two volunteers to provide childcare.
- BIIN rents a booth at the local flea market to widen our client network and speak directly about our services to the Brazos Valley immigrant population. Ideally, there would be two volunteers for each of the two shifts. A high Spanish proficiency is needed for this job.
- BIIN takes every opportunity to network with our clients and needs volunteers to table events as they come up.

## English for Parents

- English for Parents teaches basic English skills particularly as they pertain to parents supporting their kids in school. However, they don't have to have kids to take the classes. As a volunteer, your job is to help tutor one-on-one or in small groups.
  - Must be available Wednesday mornings
  - Must be fluent in English, patient and willing to learn

# Help Wanted!



We need YOUR help to make the new Communications Team successful. Please consider participating in our church's digital ministries. We are looking for:



- A team of people who can **create and edit an announcement reel** that the Pastoral Team can play during the online worship service each week.



- **Content creators** to help with graphic design, filming, editing, and planning, so that we as a church can share fresh content on our website and social media platforms.



- **Videographers/photographers** who can document special events (hygiene kits, food distribution, outdoor worship services, youth group activities, etc.)



- Someone to **gather social media analytics**. This job entails recording numbers into an Excel spreadsheet each month. No prior experience necessary, but you should be comfortable exploring the back end of social media platforms. Training will be provided.



- **Archivists** to edit portions of the online service and make them stand-alone resources that we can share with other churches for their online ministries (such as posting the sermon by itself each week).

Don't hesitate to try something new! Orientation will be provided for each of the above service opportunities.

Ready to get involved? Contact [evangelism@friends-ucc.org](mailto:evangelism@friends-ucc.org)

# CONTENT CREATORS TO *watch*

Have you been on the hunt for new podcast recommendations? What about a new YouTube channel to play in the background while you work from home? Here are six progressive Christian content creators who are sharing their faith along with their unique perspectives.



## Almost Heretical (Podcast)

Two former pastors, Nate and Tim, are "committed to helping make the church and the world a little less awful [...] by learning and teaching, especially seeking to undo the more problematic versions of Christian theology."

**Suggested episode:** Jesus Ended Hierarchy (Ep. 30)



## Unfit Christian (Blog)

Unfit Christian is written by D. Danyelle Thomas. She wants to "inspire people to believe that there is room at the table (and subsequently the cross) for all of us" through her thoughts on faith, culture, and the intersections of gender, class, and race.

**Suggested post:** Jesus Sings the Blues, Too



## Austen Lionheart (YouTube)

As a transgender Christian, Austen Hartke uses his channel to re-examine the Bible through an LGBTQ+ lens. He further explores these topics through his book *Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians*.

**Suggested Playlist:** Transgender and Christian



## Jessica Kellgren-Fozard (YouTube)

On her YouTube channel, Jessica Kellgren-Fozard covers topics such as LGBTQ+ issues, chronic illness and disabilities, accessibility, and her Quaker faith.

**Suggested video:** Oh God... Let's Talk About My Religion // What is Quakerism?



## Irenicast (Podcast)

Five friends re-imagine their Christian faith every Tuesday and Thursday through discussions on spirituality, justice, and their experiences growing up in Evangelical Christianity.

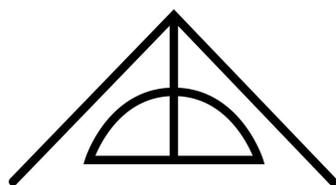
**Suggested episode:** White Supremacy in Evangelicalism (Ep. )



## Can I Say This At Church (Podcast)

Each week Seth and a guest discuss deconstruct and reconstruct their faith through conversations about the Bible, inclusiveness, and Christianity's relationship to other faiths.

**Suggested episode:** Why Church Clarity Matters with George Mekhail and Sarah Ngu



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

Our next issue is coming your way January 29, 2021! If your ministry is holding an event that you would like to see covered in the Winter issue, reach out to [office@friends-ucc.org](mailto:office@friends-ucc.org) with pictures and details!

Friends Congregational Church, UCC

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