

2020-21 Church Relations Snapshot

Austin College believes our historic and ongoing relationship to the Presbyterian Church may be most fully seen through discussion of what that relationship enables us to offer – to all our students, to the church, and to the world.

The COVID-19 Pandemic necessitated several shifts in the way we have lived out our Church-relatedness in the last 14 months. Our goal in this meeting is to enable students and staff to report to the Trustees on ways the college has adjusted its programming to accommodate the limits of the pandemic while continuing our efforts to serve students, the Church, and the world.

SERVICE STATION REPORT

Service Station activities in the 2020-21 academic year included

- **First We Serve**
This annual Opening of School activity enables first year students to engage in service together before they go to their first classes. While maintaining appropriate social distancing and COVID protocols, and under the leadership of the Service Station Board, 212 members of the Austin College Class of 2024 prepared 41,496 meals for Kids Against Hunger to donate to families on the Moskito coast of Honduras.
- **Great Day of Service >> Together We Serve**
While COVID restrictions prevented the normal annual Great Day of Service activity in which 200-300 Austin College students serve 30-40 local community agencies in a single day, the Service Station Board organized a series of COVID-appropriate service activities for interested Austin College students.
In November of 2020, Together We Serve activities enabled over 300 students to:
 - work with a representative of a local agency to prepare frames for wheelchair ramps to be installed in the homes of persons who need them and
 - Prepare an additional 42,144 meals for Kids Against Hunger.
- **Jan Serve**
In previous years, the Jan Serve program has provided opportunities for interested students to help host a major Special Olympics on the AC campus and/or go read to students in local Sherman schools.

Since COVID prevented those events this year the Service Station Board initiated several special projects:

- **Roos Reading Library**
Students and other AC community members have recorded themselves reading Children's books.

So far 102 different readers have recorded 75 different books. The recordings are available on the Austin College website for any interested classes or families.

Here's the link to the recorded books:

<https://www.austincollege.edu/campus-life/service-station/roos-reading-library/>

The password is "rooslibrary"

- The Service Station also
 - collected and distributed a **book of prayers** gathered from various student religious groups,
 - collected and sent **Letters of Hope** for local Nursing Home residents and medical personnel, and
 - Worked with the Perrin Air Force Base Museum on the Hero Project in which AC students conducted a series of interviews with local World War II veterans and the spouses
- On March 24, 2021 the Service Station Board hosted our annual **Tostan Dinner and Art Auction**.

Tostan, which means "breakthrough" in the Wolof language, is an international nonprofit organization headquartered in Dakar, Senegal. This program has spent over 35 years developing a way to put communities in charge of their own futures through a grassroots, comprehensive education program.

Austin College has partnered with Tostan since 2006,

- hosting an annual dinner where students can learn about the mission of Tostan hear from a faculty speaker about the importance and possibilities of international development and engagement and
- offering an auction of art created by Austin College students.
 - Proceeds from the art auction are sent to Tostan and used to support microcredit loans in Senegal.

- This year's art auction raised \$1415.31 that will be donated to Tostan.
- **Canned Food Drives**
In three separate canned food drives this year, the Service Station was able to collect and distribute 750 cans of food to Masterkey Ministries in Sherman, 379 cans to Meals on Wheels, and 334 to Grand Central Station.
- **Roobound**
The Service Station offered a total of four "RooBound" activities (2 per semester) in which Austin College students developed and led virtual educational activities for local elementary school children.
- **Highway Cleanup for Service Station Board members**
The Service Station Board also adopted a portion of highway 1417 in Sherman and held several highway cleanup days during the year.

ACTIVATORS

- **ACTivators Masks**

In lieu of the "God Gave Us Brains and Expects Us to Use Them" t-shirts that the ACTivators buy and give away every year to youth event participants, this year ACTivators purchased 1000 COVID masks and have given away over 800 to
 - 228 alumni
 - 700 current students
 - 14 Faculty or Staff members
 - Several Trustees
 - 5 prospective students
 - 16 parents of ACTivator alums
 - 18 friends of the College
- **JHaMS**

In July 2020 ACTivators were able to work with Grace Presbytery to adjust a Junior High Retreat called "JHaMS" and do it remotely.

Participants gathered at their own churches or logged on from their homes and participated virtually in Bible Study, Music, discussion, and fellowship activities. 2 ACTivators and one ACTivator alumna helped lead Recreation and Small Group activities.

- **Differences Among Us**

ACTivators led the “Differences Among Us” session during our Opening of School Weekend.

That’s a program where six upper class students read monologues as caricatures types of Austin College students.

The point of the session is to help entering students recognize, embrace, and celebrate the diversity of the Austin College student body.

- **“Let’s ACTivate!”**

Since we couldn’t go off campus to lead any youth retreats or Worship services at Nursing Homes, and because we wanted to promote the ACTivators to new students, we had 2 “Let’s Activate!” sessions in October.

We gathered in Majors Chapel, did some energizers, sang some camp songs, and did a little Bible Study.

It was a good way to meet freshmen who had participated in ACTivators events when they were younger and get them connected to older ACTivators during this weird COVID time.

- **ACTivators 25th Anniversary Homecoming Reunion**

2020 was also the 25th Anniversary of the founding of the ACTivators.

We had several celebrations planned but we had to cancel the in-person, on-campus things.

Instead, we were able to host a Zoom meeting on the Friday afternoon of Homecoming weekend last October.

We had over 40 current or former ACTivators attend the reunion on Zoom.

We did energizers, told stories, and looked at lots of old photos.

We met over a dozen children of ACTivators as well.

- **ACTivators Parties**

Even though we couldn't go out and lead youth retreats last Fall like we normally do, we still decided it would be good to see if there was some way for ACTivators to serve the church.

We have 25 years worth of youth retreat skits that we have used through the years to tell Bible stories and engage with junior high youth.

And we wanted to give new ACTivators a chance to meet and work with older ACTivators and do something beneficial to the Church.

So we decided to make videos of 3 different sets of Youthquake skits, edit them, and then make them available to churches to use with their own youth for retreats or Church School classes.

We call them "ACTivators Parties."

- **Installation of Gilmont Co-Directors**

Although there weren't the normal children's and youth retreats this Spring that ACTivators usually lead, we were invited to help lead the Installation Service for Jenifer and Kenny Rigoulot as Co-Directors of Camp Gilmont in East Texas.

- **Worship Leadership for Migrant Teens at Dallas Convention Center**

While ACTivators were at Camp Gilmont, we were invited to help lead music at the Protestant Worship service on May 23 for the 1500 migrant teen boys who are currently housed at the Kay BaileyHutchinson Convention Center in Dallas.

- **ACTivators Summary**

Since its founding in 1995, the ACTivators program has involved

- **596** Austin College students
- who have traveled over **78,000** miles
- to plan and lead **723** ministry events
 - involving over **57,000** children, youth, adults, college students, and senior citizens from **14** states
- **53** former ACTivators currently serve as full-time clergy or educators in

Presbyterian Church USA congregations or specialized ministries
in 12 states

- **67** former ACTivators have attended seminary
- **26** former ACTivators have served as Presbyterian Church (USA) Young Adult Volunteers

BIBLE STUDY AND WORSHIP

After the pandemic started and the College went all-remote after Spring Break last year, we had Zoom Bible Study every Tuesday night until the end of June 2020 and then from August 2020 until last week.

Our weekly Bible Studies are Lectionary-based and the passage we study becomes the center of the following Sunday's Communion Service.

COVID made us change how we did Bible Study, but it didn't make us quit.

COVID also made us change our weekly Sunday night communion services.

We did Zoom-only Worship last year from March through June.

Then, in August, we started doing hybrid services where some students gathered in Grum Sanctuary, maintained social distance, and kept our masks on. We were able to take communion using individually-wrapped cups and wafers.

In March, we moved the in-person worshippers to Majors Chapel. We still do social distancing, we still wear masks, and we still have a few students join us on Zoom every week.

CAMPUS-WIDE SERVICES

In addition to weekly Bible Study and Sunday Night Worship, we have also been able to continue many of the traditional Wynne Chapel services this year.

We produced a virtual **Baccalaureate** in Grum Sanctuary last Spring that featured a sermon by former ACTivator and Majors Intern **Rev. Amy Poling Sutherlun**, 00; music from A Cappella Choir Director Wayne Crannell; and leadership from Majors Interns, An Alumnus from the Class of 1970, Chaplain Williams, and President O'Day.

If you're interested, you can view that service on YouTube. Just look up "Austin College Baccalaureate 2020."

We were able to host the annual **Homecoming/Family Weekend Worship** on Zoom last Fall. We had several hundred alumni participate virtually in that service as well.

In November, we recorded and streamed our annual **Service of Lessons and Carols**.

That service included several pre-recorded Choir pieces and prayers and readings from students, faculty, staff members, Chaplain Williams, and President O'Day.

You can also see that service on the Austin College YouTube channel. So far it has over 3500 views.

Pre-recording the Lessons and Carols Service gave us the idea of pre-recording the annual **Wynne Chapel Presbyterian Christmas Eve Worship Service** as well.

That service was

- recorded in Wynne Chapel in early December,
- streamed on December 24 on the Facebook pages of Austin College, Covenant Presbyterian Church, and Grand Avenue Presbyterian Church,
- And broadcast locally on KTEN television on Christmas Eve.

WYNNE CHAPEL MATTERS

In addition to the annual Chapel services and events that were discussed above, in 2020-2021 Grum Sanctuary and Majors Chapel have also served as the venues for

- the Tostan Dinner and Art Auction
- a recording by the A Cappella Choir and Student Symphony of Vivaldi's *Gloria in D Major*
- Muslim Students Association Friday Prayers
- Indian Cultural Association Multicultural Fair

In 2021-22, Wynne Chapel will host

- Opening Convocation
- Homecoming/Family Weekend Worship
- Lessons and Carols
- Sherman Presbyterian Christmas Eve Service
- Grace Presbytery Senior High Youth Connection
- Jewish Students Association Seder Dinner
- Honors Convocation
- Baccalaureate
- As well as a variety of other student and community activities.