Reach Out and Touch Someone

By B. J. Hutto, Pastor

As the holiday season approaches, I suspect that your family’s plans, like ours, are different than they would have been if we weren’t all laboring through the COVID pandemic. Even if we’ve found ways to assuage it now and then, the distance that we have had to keep from one another throughout the last eight months has been wearying for all of us. Unfortunately, I expect that that weariness will deepen for many of us, and for our loved ones, as Thanksgiving and Christmas come and there are holes in our lives where old traditions and traditional gatherings used to be. Get-togethers will be smaller or non-existent. Travel will be curtailed. This holiday season will be unlike any other. It will be hard, and there will be grief. Expect that. Prepare for it.

Because of all of that, be gentle with yourself during this season. Be gentle with your loved ones and know that they are processing their grief too. Give grace. Take extra steps to care for one another, and take extra steps to express love and care to friends, family members, and neighbors. While we can’t get together as we would normally, we can still reach out. Send cards. Make phone calls and video calls. Schedule Zoom get-togethers. As tired as we may be of such things after eight months of them, they’re going to be increasingly important in the coming weeks because consciously or unconsciously we will all be missing something that is supposed to be there in our lives but won’t be. Some of you may have seen it, but there’s an old, legendary South Central Bell television commercial featuring Bear Bryant. The original idea was for him to finish the ad by commanding “Call Yo Momma” in his best drawl. Instead, though, he ad-libbed: “Have you called your momma today? I sure wish I could call mine.” There’s something to that, with parents and with everybody else in our lives.

Finally, if you find yourself having a particularly difficult time with loneliness over the holidays, please reach out to your church. Contact your deacon or one of your ministers and let us know. Know that there is no shame in needing to do so. Know that you are not alone in that struggle—there are countless others around you who are struggling with the same things—but also know that you are not alone in that struggle, because your family at Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church is here for you.
Since Wednesday, September 2, our students and I have been meeting outside between the E-wing and the gym. It’s been great to see them and catch up on life. We usually share a meal, followed by games and a devotion before heading home for the evening. It’s fun and gives me something to look forward to each week.

But I’ll be honest; it’s not like it used to be. I used to show up on Wednesday nights excited to see our youth running around in the gym or hanging out upstairs doing homework or listening to music before we would begin our time together. I used to look forward to putting together lessons that usually included a “video of the week” that I could show on the big screens in our youth room. I used to get excited about the free time after the lesson when we would hang around for games of ping pong, video games, or basketball in the gym. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has drastically altered our approach to ministry.

Obviously, this does not only affect our youth. It has been over seven months since we last met in person for Sunday Bible Study. We recently started meeting in person for worship, but with significant safety measures in place. And for most of us, we have not enjoyed the joy and camaraderie of Wednesday night suppers since March. Our entire way of doing and sharing life together has been subverted in ways we could never have imagined at the beginning of this year.

And yet, as I meditate on our current situation, I’m reminded of Paul’s words in his letter to the Philippians when he writes, “Not that I am referring to being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:11-13).

Throughout his missionary journeys, Paul encountered numerous obstacles along the way. The threat of hunger, sickness, and even death lingered as he shared the good news of the gospel. Yet, in the midst of pain and hardship, Paul claims, “I have learned to be content with whatever I have.” Perhaps there is a word of hope in there for us. While our present circumstances are not ideal, they do not have to be dead ends.

Before us is an opportunity. An opportunity to reimagine our life together, to reimagine what ministry is and what it can be for our community and world. Before us is an opportunity to declutter and realign our values so that we can live more fully into the call to be “ambassadors for Christ” (1 Corinthians 5:2). But, before we get there, we must learn to look harder and deeper at our present moment and see that God is still present in our discontent and disorientation. God is still working in and among us, perhaps even in ways we have yet to see come to fruition.

And if we are to see it, however, we must find contentment, that place inside us that sings, “Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, ‘It is well, it is well, with my soul.’”
How Will You Serve?

By Claire Chinn, Minister of Children and Mission

It is hard to believe that we are on the edge of the holiday season. Sometimes this year has felt like a million years, and other times it feels like it has absolutely flown by. Yet here we are staring down this very odd and uncertain season. Do we travel? What about large family gatherings? What about our beloved events that just mean so much to us? No matter what we do, our holiday season is going to look drastically different.

There is one part of the holiday season that will not look different. That is our support for our local partner UCOM (United Community Outreach Ministry). For decades we have supported UCOM not only during the holidays, collecting food for Thanksgiving and Christmas bags, but also through the CROP Walk and annual fundraisers. This year, however, UCOM is looking to feed and support a much larger number of clients. Food insecurity has always been a large need in our city, and during the COVID-19 pandemic food insecurity has grown exponentially and UCOM has stepped up to the plate.

This is where you come in. This congregation has always been incredibly generous in your support of UCOM. During the months of November and December there are a number of ways you can help support UCOM.

On November 1 at 2:00 p.m. South Jax Presbyterian will be hosting the annual CROP Walk. There are opportunities to walk in person (a one-mile or three-mile route), walk on your own, or to give financially to HAB’s team. See https://www.crophungerwalk.org/jacksonvillesouth and then search for Hendricks Avenue Baptist for more information or to donate.

On November 15 UCOM will be hosting their annual gala virtually. They will be producing a video that will share the heart and mission UCOM. They will also be doing their annual fundraising campaign on that day.

Through Sunday, November 15, we will be collecting items in the narthex for the UCOM Thanksgiving food drive. UCOM will then take these items and create Thanksgiving dinner bags for their clients.

There are so many different ways in which we can connect and help UCOM continue to serve our neighborhood in meaningful ways. I pray that we will be a congregation who rises to meet the needs of those in our community. How will you serve?

(With all these different ways to serve, please refer to our weekly e-mail, social media, and bulletin announcements for more details.)
Sympathy to…
…Sympathy to Dan and Kay Weston in the death of Dan’s father on Monday, September 28, 2020, in New Jersey.

Thank you...
Dear HAB Family,
Thank you for the cards and phone calls after the passing of Steve’s father and Janis’ mother. They were a source of comfort. We love our brothers and sisters at HAB. — Janis & Steve Price

The Whittle family would like to thank everyone for the cards, notes, thoughts, and prayers following the death of my mother, Mary Ruth “Murphy” Whittle. The memories on the Internet were also heartfelt and comforting. We will have a celebration of life service, to be decided in the future. Again, thanks so much. — Rick & Nancy Whittle

Dear HAB Family,
Thank all of you for your many cards, calls, and personal remembrances at the time of the recent death of my sister, Dr. Shirley Beville. They certainly helped to soothe the grief of her passing. I so appreciate your loving thoughts that brought tears of joy to me at that sad time. — Martha Douberly

News of the Church Family

A LIFE OF FAITH
LESSONS FROM THE PSALMS

Join Susan and Joe Stepp for “A Life of Faith: Lessons from the Psalms.” The lessons will be available beginning at 8:00 a.m. each Sunday morning through November 22. Look for them on our Facebook page or our YouTube channel. You can interact with this material and with one another on both Facebook and YouTube in the chat features, or you can visit the lessons at your own leisure.

Vespers evening prayer

Wednesday Evenings
6:30 p.m.
in person
or
online on Facebook
or YouTube.

Needed: Community Garden Leader

We are looking for a new leader for our Community Garden. This person would be responsible for the planning, coordinating, and executing of planting and harvesting different crops, flowers, and herbs. The leader would coordinate and manage these responsibilities: order and distribute new soil to the beds, grow and harvest different produce, water, weed, mulch the walkways, fertilize, and basic upkeep of the space.

If you are interested, please contact Claire at claire@habchurch.com or 904-424-8490.
From the Library
By Julie Babcock, librarian

I know we’ll all be glad when we can be together in our library and life is more normal than it is now, although I don’t think what we have known in the past as “normal” may ever be again. When we are able to re-open the library, there will be several books for you to check out that have been released since all of this started for us back in March. There have been releases from Charles Martin, Jodi Picoult, David Baldacci, John Grisham, Nicholas Sparks, Fredrik Backman, and a couple of your other favorite authors.

We are also excited to have two children’s books written by Rev. Rebekah McLeod Hutto, wife of our new pastor, Dr. B.J. Hutto. The titles are The Day When God Made Church (A Child’s First Book about Pentecost) and Paul and His Friends.

I hope to have them all in, processed for checkout, and on the shelves by the time we feel it is safe for folks to be in the HAB library. Until then, I will be on the lookout for more releases. Stay safe, wear your masks, take care of yourselves, and hopefully we’ll find a way to deal with a re-opening.

Just in case you walk by the library window, there are still leprechauns and Celtic crosses from the last display I did in March! Hopefully it won’t be as long as next March before we are back in more of a regular routine in YOUR library!

If you are unable or not yet ready to join us for in-person worship, the service will be available online on Sundays at 11:00 a.m. on our YouTube or Facebook pages. The YouTube link is https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzdiHq1ue_3GjixqyBFL6dA

The Offering Plate

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DID YOU KNOW? You can give online at habchurch.com; then choose “Give.”
Little Friends “Sacred Glass Collection”
Offered Through November
By Julie Mason, Little Friends Board Chair

Have you seen the beautiful jewelry and suncatchers/Christmas ornaments made with the shards from the stained glass window in the old sanctuary (the one that burned, remember?) Two days before Christmas in 2007 everything from the pipe organ to the last hymnbook went up in an inferno of flames. The “Sacred Glass Collection” fundraiser will continue through November. To see these beautiful items, click on this link:
https://www.littlefriendsathab.com/sacred-glass-fundraiser
Or you can go to the Little Friends web site (littlefriendsathabchurch.com) and select “Sacred Glass Fundraiser” from the top of the page. These lovely, one-of-a-kind beauties were created by artists Bette Len Mitchell and Danielle Clark to benefit Little Friends—100% of the purchase price goes for teacher support. Be a friend of Little Friends!

Jewelry and Suncatchers
Modeled by our Little Friends:

Little Friends Heroes:
Debbie Hagan, always a present help in trouble
Bill Mercer, toy maker
Dora Orr, substitute teacher extraordinaire
In anticipation of the coming holidays, I am sad to say the HAB kitchen ministry is still on hold. It is hard to let go of “how we’ve always done things” and look for new, meaningful ways to share the holiday season with our loved ones. Personally, I am already praying for a bright, sunny Florida Thanksgiving Day so the whole Maszy clan can gather outside for the festivities.

Maybe it is time for all of us to figure out a way to get out of our comfort zone, safely of course! For me, that would be trying a recipe I would never have considered making. If that sounds like a challenge you might like, I have two things to recommend. One is a cook on YouTube. I found out on Facebook that I am not the only one at HAB that follows Cooking with Brenda Gantt. She is a hoot! Bette Len Mitchell is trying her pound cake recipe. I have made her fried green tomatoes for an appetizer several times. Delicious!

For my challenge I made Fish Chowder for the first time. It is so good it got a thumbs up from Gene and Dawson and Sylvia McQuaig.

May God bless our church, our ministries, and our HAB family during one of the strangest holiday seasons we will ever experience!

EASY FISH CHOWDER

1 Tablespoon oil
3 slices bacon, diced
1 cup diced onion
2 stalks celery, diced
2 carrots, peeled and sliced
2 medium white potatoes, peeled and diced
2 cups chicken or vegetable broth
1.5 – 2 pounds white fish fillets*
1 cup corn, frozen or canned (drained)
1–2 teaspoons Old Bay**
salt and pepper, to taste
2 cups fat-free half & half
2 Tablespoons cornstarch, optional

Heat oil in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Sauté bacon until it starts to crisp. Add onion, potatoes, and carrots. Sauté for about 10 more minutes.

Add broth and lay fish on top of potatoes in pot. (Don’t worry about cutting it up. It will flake apart when cooked.)

Add the Old Bay, salt, and pepper. Bring the mixture to a boil, reduce heat to medium, and cover and cook until fish and potatoes are cooked through, about 10 minutes. Add the corn. Use a spatula to break the fish into chunks.

Reduce the heat and add the milk and half and half. Heat through but do not boil. If it is too thin, make a slurry of the cornstarch and a few spoons of the soup’s liquid. Stir this into the simmering soup. Stir and simmer until it thickens.

* I used a combination of flounder and snapper. You can use cod, haddock, etc. Make sure to remove any bones and skin.
** I used the garlic & herb Old Bay; it’s delicious.
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www.habchurch.com

For information about our Sunday Bible study classes, upcoming events, new books at the library, Wednesday night menus, and more.

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