

# Hendricks Herald

June  
2025



## Undue Medical Debt and *Time Magazine* by B.J. Hutto, Senior Pastor

I have great news that I want to share with all of you! Last Advent HAB embarked on a mission to buy and forgive medical debt in our community. We'd never done anything like this, so we didn't know how it would go, but it went gangbusters! We raised enough money to buy up and erase over 3.4 million dollars(!) of medical debt in Duval and surrounding counties. We changed the lives of over 2,500 families in our area, and we even heard from one of them, who reached out to tell us just how much it meant to him. He said that the debt forgiveness was one thing, but to have been loved by a group of strangers—simply, I think, to have been remembered in this world—gave him a sense of hope that he

desperately needed. What we did last year wasn't just great; it was genuinely and truly good.

Our partner in that effort was Undue Medical Debt (UMD), a national nonprofit that has been in this line of service for over a decade. Well, we've just learned that UMD has been honored by *TIME Magazine*. *TIME* selected the UMD CEO, Allison Sesso, as one of their "100 Most Influential People in the World" and one of their "100 Most Influential People in Global Health"! In her announcement email, Sesso writes,

*"This milestone isn't just about an individual; it's a powerful testament to the collective impact we are making together. When I joined this organization in 2020, I could have only dreamed that our work would garner such significant national and international attention. This recognition shines a brighter light on the critical issue we are addressing and the millions of lives we are touching. Every single step we've taken, every family we've helped, has been made possible by your unwavering belief in our mission. Your passion and generosity fuel our ability to bring relief and hope to those burdened by crushing medical debt. . . . This TIME100 recognition is a powerful validation of our shared vision and the effectiveness of our collective efforts. It fuels our determination to do even more."*

Those are incredibly gracious words, but they also just so happen to be true. It's because of people like us, institutions like HAB, that Undue Medical Debt is able to help millions and millions of people around the country. Theirs is a wonderful organization, and they deserve to be celebrated, but I want all of you to take a victory lap as well. To forgive the debt of a stranger is no small thing. And, in fact, it is perhaps one of the most Christ-like things any of us could ever do.

So, thank you! Thank you for being such incredibly generous people! Thank you for loving and serving and forgiving! Thank you for being Christians—"little Christs"—in these difficult times. And well done! You deserve your part in this celebration!

Kind regards,  
B.J.





## Vacation Bible School

**June 9-13**

**9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.**

**Kids in grades K-5 completed**

**Register at [habchurch.com](http://habchurch.com)**

### YOUR HELP IS NEEDED FOR VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL!

The theme is “*Surf’s Up! Strength when the waves get rough.*” We can’t have VBS without volunteers, so please contact Chelsea at [children@habchurch.com](mailto:children@habchurch.com) to help.



*Chelsea Weise,  
Director of Children  
and Community Life*





## Youth vs. Adults Volleyball Fundraiser



What a night at HAB! The Youth vs. Adults Volleyball Game brought the energy, and the youth brought home the WIN, winning 2 out of 3 games in a spirited best-of-three match. Following the game, the real splash came when **Chelsea Weise**, Director of Children & Community Life, was officially slimed after receiving the most contributions from our congregation. Each dollar counted as a vote toward the minister you wanted to see get slimed, and Chelsea was a good sport and took it like a champ!

A big thank you to everyone who came out, supported, played, and gave so generously. We are truly grateful and already looking forward to next year's matchup!







## News of Our Church Family



*by Margaret Douglass, New Member Team*

**Aleesha Gray** is our joyful new member! HAB welcomes her with open arms. One cannot be sad when talking with her, since her positivity is infectious. We can thank Caroline Welkley for inviting her to visit HAB.

Aleesha grew up in West Virginia, where Randy Moss [former NFL football player, for you non-sports types] was her friend. She visited Jacksonville in the early 2000s, liked it, and moved here permanently in 2018 after her children were grown and on their own. She has a son, two daughters (one of whom lives in Jacksonville), and five grandchildren.

The state of West Virginia employed Aleesha before she moved to Jacksonville, where she joined the postal service. In December of 2024, she moved to another federal position by working in the hospital at NAS Jax. Unfortunately, she lost her job with the recent federal job cuts. Aleesha is pursuing a return to the postal service. Meanwhile, she works part time at a Winn Dixie.

Aleesha holds a certificate in gerontology that she earned during her studies for an associate degree. She has a special interest in the aging population. Her other interests include cooking, listening to music, taking long walks, and spending time with her grandchildren.



## What Is the Church?

*By anonymous member*

I had a recent experience of the meaning of “Church.” While attending a church meal event, a member couple approached me about a mutual friend, whom I’ll call Jane. The couple inquired about health issues Jane was experiencing. I responded that Jane was feeling unwell that day and regretted missing the meal we were about to enjoy. The couple said, “No problem! We will pack up a meal and take it to her house. Please let her know we are coming.” After we ate, the couple approached me and said that due to an upcoming meeting, they would deliver the meal in an hour. The person sitting next to me, whom I’ll call Bob, immediately offered to take the meal to Jane’s house as he was headed in that direction. I telephoned Jane to let her know that Bob was on his way.

Later that evening, Jane phoned me to tell me how much she enjoyed the food. She also said that the kind couple had called her and prayed with her over the phone. Jane was so grateful as she tearfully recounted the experience.

That, my friends, is “the Church.” Asking, reaching, helping, loving, moving, caring, praying. It isn’t watching some random Sunday service while we sip our morning coffee. It isn’t talking about those hypocritical Christians in another building. It isn’t bemoaning the times God failed to do what we wanted God to do. Church is about showing up, week after week, knowing and loving those folks in those pews and caring about what is happening in their lives. This was such a seemingly simple gesture but for me, I saw “the Church” in all her glory. I am so grateful for the experience.







*Where in the  
World Is HAB?*  
#HABOnTheMap

Wherever you go this summer, take HAB with you. In each place you visit, take a photo of your family holding the HAB drawing (available in the narthex). Then email your photo to [laraine@habchurch.com](mailto:laraine@habchurch.com) and post it on social media with the hash tag #HABOnTheMap.



The HAB group who attended the CBFGA Senior Adult Retreat in St. Simons Island on May 5-7 ran into Kyle Reese.

Back row: Jon Yost, Dolly Colwell, Garry Andriess, Kris Butler, Kyle Reese.

Front row: Steve Fordham, Pam Fordham, Carolyn Hinckley

Debbie Hagan and  
Susan Howell  
Sautee Nacoochee, Georgia

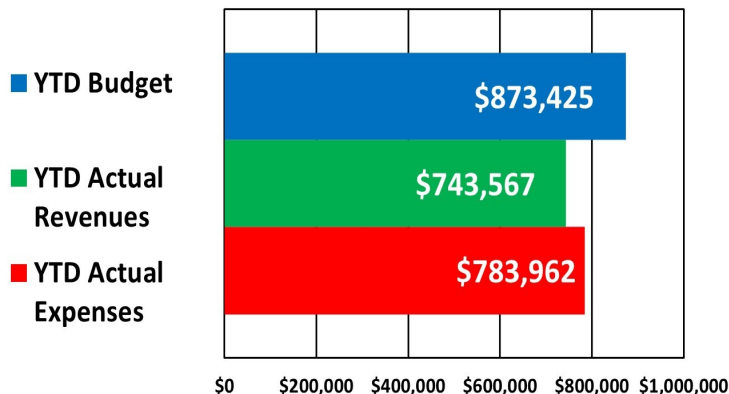
## DID YOU KNOW?

Even if you're out of town, you can give online by going to [bit.ly/HABGiving](https://bit.ly/HABGiving) or by scanning the QR code.



## YTD Financial Update as of 05/23/2025

Fiscal year September 2024 - August 2025







## From the Church Mouse

Hello there, HAB friends! I thought there would be less activity to tell you about as the school year is winding down, but my mailbox overflows!

**Laurie McDonald** is one of 13 recipients of the **Cindy Edelman Excellence in Teaching Fellowship Awards** this year. A mathematics teacher at Atlantic Coast High School, she will use the fellowship

experience to create equitable opportunities for students to succeed in advanced mathematics, attending the Mathematics Leadership Summit at Stanford University. Her proposal focuses on expanding access to higher-level mathematics for a broader range of students.

**Susan Price** just returned from her adventure to New Mexico, where she visited several parks and historic sites. She even did some “alien research” in Roswell. She flew to Chicago, took the train west, and then drove to various sites. Her advice: “Whether by plane, train, and/or automobile, this area is well worth your time to visit.”



**Mary & Ben Bridgman and Debbie Crumb** just returned from two weeks visiting five countries near the Adriatic Sea—Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia and Italy! It was a fabulous mix of different cultures, including delicious seafood and beautiful scenery. One of the most picturesque cities was Dubrovnik, Croatia. (For you *Game of Thrones* fans, Old Town Dubrovnik stood in for Kings Landing during filming of the series.) Mary,

Ben, and Debbie “enjoyed” a damp, windy afternoon walking the walls surrounding Old Town with the Adriatic Sea in the background.

**Anne Hueser & Curt Beadell** shared their love of Scottish Country Dance with the St. Andrew’s Society of



Jacksonville recently. With the help of several current and former Highland dancers, they demonstrated two dances to the gathering. A good time was had by all!

**Susan & Joe Stepp** are sharing some good news about their daughter, **Jenny Stepp Breen**. (A number of our older members helped raise Jenny at HAB!) Jenny just received tenure at Syracuse Law School, where she teaches Constitutional, Administrative, and Labor Law. She has been at Syracuse since 2019.



(continued on next page)



(Church Mouse, *continued*)



**Becky Sullivan** just returned from a cruise to Honduras, Cozumel, and Belize. I'm surprised that Becky didn't get up on that stage (pictured) and join in the fun! Maybe someday your poor little Church Mouse will sneak into someone's pocket and get to go on a cruise! That sounds like so much fun!

That's about it for this month! I look forward to telling you about many more adventures of our HAB members as the summer begins and travel increases. Such fun awaits our HAB members. I can hardly wait!

If you know of events that need to be celebrated (yours or others'), please email the Church Mouse at [churchmouse@habchurch.com](mailto:churchmouse@habchurch.com) so your church family can rejoice in these milestones and special recognitions!







Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church  
4001 Hendricks Avenue  
Jacksonville, FL 32207-6321  
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As we travel throughout the year, let's remember that the work of HAB continues. Please take advantage of online giving to continue supporting our ministries. Or, **before you go, set up a recurring gift** so that you won't have to remember! It's easy!

Go to [bit.ly/HABGiving](https://bit.ly/HABGiving) or scan this QR code:



VISIT [habchurch.com](https://habchurch.com)  
for more information.

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Contact us at [info@habchurch.com](mailto:info@habchurch.com) or 904-396-7745  
Website: [habchurch.com](https://habchurch.com)

**B.J. Hutto**, Ph.D., Senior Pastor  
**Thomas M. Shapard**, D.P.M., Associate Pastor for Music & Worship • **Britt Hester**, M.Div., Associate Pastor for Youth  
**Chelsea Weise**, B.C.E., Director of Children & Community Life • **Laraine Humbert**, B.M.E., Pastoral Assistant  
**Darrell Mitchell**, M.B.A., Financial Manager • **H. Kendell Smith**, Dip.C.M., Minister of Music Emeritus