



"Some Reflections on Worship " By B.J. Hutto, Senior Pastor

Friends,

As the holiday season continues to roll on, I would like to wish each of you a blessed Advent and a very Merry Christmas! If my timing is right, then you are getting *The Herald* just a few days before Christmas itself. So, while I have you, go ahead and set your calendars! Plan on being at our Longest Night service on the evening of Sunday, December 21st. The Rev. Heather Carlton will be offering a homily, and there will be thirty minutes of quiet meditation beforehand for those who would like some more intentional peace. Then, on December 24th at 5:30, be sure to be at HAB for our Christmas Eve service! This is always such a wonderful celebration, and you certainly don't want to miss it! (And, as always, invite a friend who you think would appreciate it!)

One of the things that I love most about HAB is that we keep the worship life of the church at the center of our life together. We train up our children and youth in The Faith, and we give them an opportunity to lead a worship service. We raise money for medical debt relief, and we set aside a Sunday morning to celebrate it and give thanks to God for the opportunity to do so. We honor the academic achievements of our members, young and old alike, and we do so as a part of our regular, 11:00 worship. This practice is so important, and yet so many people around us miss it. Worship—the intentional, communal act of glorifying God—is the one thing that places like HAB offer that people cannot get anywhere else. They can serve their neighbors through a civic organization, they can seek wisdom and learn ethics in books they buy on Amazon, they can try to learn about the Bible and theology through podcasts or on the internet (but please do not go and do this, because it's usually a terrible idea!), but people cannot come together and worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ except at a church. Thus, it's good that we weave worship through the rest of our life together and that we weave the rest of our life together into our worship.

There is one more special worship service that I want to highlight for all of you. Actually, I suppose, there are two.... The first is going to be on the evening of Friday, January 9th, when I will be preaching during the Shabbat service of The Temple, Jacksonville. The second is on Sunday, January 11th, when Rabbi Maya Glasser from The Temple will be preaching in our worship service here at HAB. Since it is something that we do every year, it would be easy for us to take this pulpit exchange for granted. But make no mistake: this partnership is a rare and precious thing. And in a world that is increasingly fractious along cultural and religious lines, it is a counter-witness to the powers around us. So please: plan on being a part of these celebrations!

Our relationship to The Temple has gone back decades. I've heard, from their members, how Rev. Jack Snell used to stand watch outside of their sanctuary when they did not have security for their High Holy Days. I've heard our members fondly recall how youth from The Temple would cover our childcare during services on Christmas, Easter, etc., and HAB youth would return the favor and cover their childcare during their festivals as well. And while we know members of The Temple as neighbors and partners in other ways—indeed, as we know them as friends—it is so beautiful, and so important, that we have placed worship at the center of that relationship. It's the best way for us to know them and for them to know us, and every time we join together, it is a glorious celebration!

Kind regards,



Britt Hester, Associate Pastor for Community Life and Spiritual Formation

“WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?”

We exist in a world that abhors waiting. Nearly against our will, we are bombarded with messages urging us to hurry up and do more. What are you waiting for? Don't miss out! You only live once! Our culture prizes speed, productivity, and instant results, often making us feel that if we pause, we might fall behind.

Rarely are we encouraged to wait simply for the sake of waiting. Waiting is not glamorous. In a society that celebrates efficiency and quick outcomes, slowing down can feel uncomfortable or even pointless. This is part of why Advent is such a countercultural season. Instead of rushing, Advent invites us to pause, breathe, and wait.

Many of us struggle with that invitation. Waiting feels like doing nothing, and doing nothing feels unproductive. But what if waiting is not wasted time at all? What if the waiting itself is the gift?

Jesus understood this truth. In the wilderness, he faced temptations that promised quick success and easy solutions. Each temptation carried the same message we still hear today: Why wait when you can have what you want now? Yet Jesus resisted. He knew that genuine transformation cannot be rushed. The things of God cannot be seized or manufactured. They can only be received.

And receiving requires waiting.

Jesus' time in the wilderness was not empty or pointless. It was a season of shaping. The waiting prepared him for the work ahead and deepened his trust in God's timing and provision. Advent extends a similar invitation to us. When we choose to wait, we become people who are able to receive the gifts of God's promises.

Advent, in this sense, is a season of sacred tension. We prepare and we pause. We anticipate and we reflect. We long for Christ's coming, yet we also discover Christ's presence in the longing itself. Advent reminds us that waiting is not the space before something important happens. Waiting is the sacred space where God is already at work.

Something happens in the quiet. When we slow down long enough to sit with our hopes, fears, and desires, our souls begin to breathe again. We start to recognize our deeper longings for peace, belonging, and love. In that stillness, we often hear God whisper: Be still. Trust. Light is on the way.

So perhaps the question this season is not “What are you waiting for?” but “Who are you becoming as you wait?”

As we journey toward the manger together, I pray that it is a meaningful, hopeful time of waiting for you and your loved ones. In the waiting, let us become people ready to receive our Lord, resting in the quiet assurance that the Light, no matter how dark and cold it may seem, will arrive.



As the New Year arrives, everything seems to sparkle with possibility. Calendars flip to January, classrooms refill, and even the air feels a little crisp.

But before you rush into all the excitement of a new year, take a moment to remember something wonderful: God loves new beginnings.

In the Bible, God is always doing something new. God makes rainbows after storms. God calls people into new adventures. God gives fresh hope, new mercies, and second chances. So, when a New Year comes around, it's like a giant reminder that God delights in helping us grow, learn, and become more like Jesus.

Instead of thinking only about resolutions like "eat more vegetables" or "clean my room," think about heart habits. What are some small practices that help us walk with God each day?

Maybe whisper a simple prayer each morning. Or see if you can spot one person each day who needs a smile, a helping hand, or an encouraging word. At bedtime, name three things you're grateful for. Even silly ones count!

Sometimes, the New Year can feel a little uncertain. But here's the truth that never changes: God goes with you wherever you go.

Joshua 1:9 reminds us, *"Be strong and courageous... for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."* That means God is with you when you're trying something new, when you're making new friends, and even when you feel nervous or unsure.

Much love!



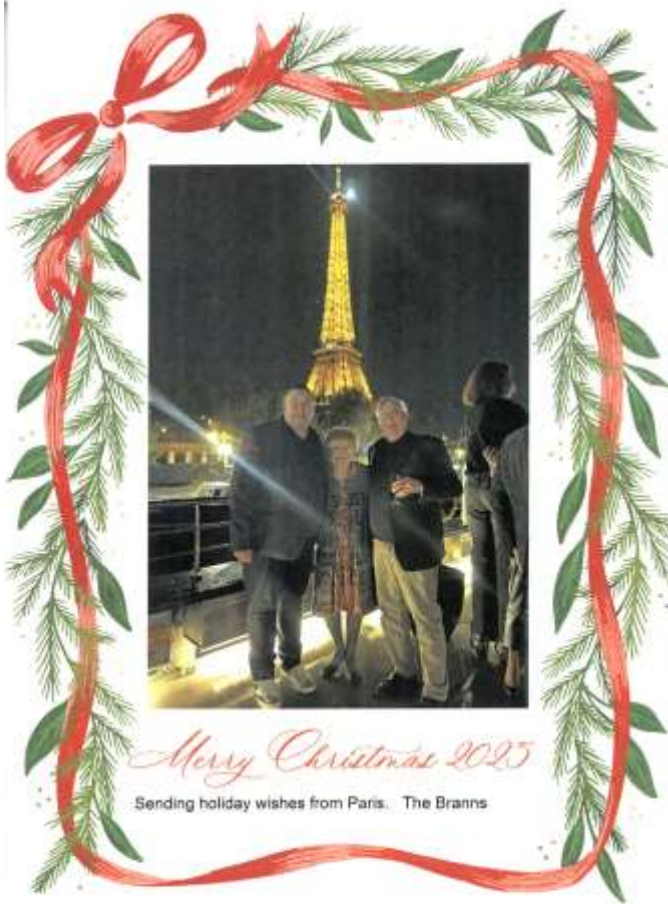
*Chelsea Weise,
Minister to Children*

*Contact Chelsea at
children@habchurch.com*

FROM THE CHURCH MOUSE



Well, sweet folks, that's it for this month, I guess! It would be nice to get a bit more mail in my email box, churchmouse@habchurch.com, then everyone could share in your joy, exciting travels, and family news. Meanwhile, I'll just keep my big ears open and tuned to see what I can learn by snooping! Bye for this month. Hope to see you around!



Bob, Jackie & Chris Brann were in Paris October 30 - November 4. The Brann's also visited the Louvre, Notre Dame Cathedral, the Eiffel Tower, and other parts of interest. They also had a riverboat dinner cruise on the Saine River.

Christ is the Executive Director of Operations for the Vanderbilt Women's Basketball team. Vanderbilt has been invited to play in the opening day games of the NCAA Basketball season. Vanderbilt played CAL and won.

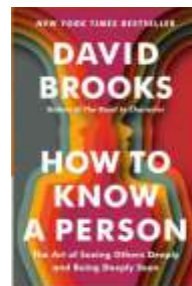


Bob & Jackie Brann had the opportunity to see Biltmore House while visiting Bob's sister Jo who lives in Columbia, SC. The Biltmore was decorated for Christmas and was absolutely beautiful. They were excited to be able to cross one more off their bucket list.



Calling all Readers!

Join us for our monthly Book Discussion led by Pastors B.J. Hutto and Britt Hester. We have lively and fun-filled discussions on a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts. Our January discussion takes place on **January 18 at 4:00pm** (followed by snacks and laughter!) at the home of Alyson Lee, 3636 Silvery Lane. The text is a novel by astronomer Carl Sagan, entitled “Contact.” In February we will look at a non-fiction bestseller by the New York Times columnist, David Brooks, entitled “How to Know a



Person.” Britt will lead this discussion on **February 8 at 3:30 pm. (note the time change)**. In March, date TBD, B.J. will lead us in discussing Frederick Buechner’s timeless classic, “Whistling in the Dark, A Doubter’s Dictionary.” (A little secret: even if you haven’t finished or even started the book, you can still come to the discussion! It is great to spend time together, and it is always interesting.) All are welcome so feel free to invite a friend.

JOIN US FOR WEDNESDAY NIGHT SUPPER!



You’re invited to join us each Wednesday for a wonderful meal (that you don’t have to cook!) and great fellowship. Please make reservations by Monday each week by contacting Sheila at sheila@habchurch.com or 904-396-7745, ext. 103. Adults are \$12, children \$8, and the immediate family maximum is \$30. The children’s menu each week is chicken nuggets and fries. Please specify adult or children’s meal when making reservations. If you’d like a permanent reservation, please let us know. We’d just ask you to cancel on weeks when you can’t be present. The meal is served beginning at 5:15 p.m.

January 7: Company chicken breast, white/brown rice, green beans almondine, field salad, and apple/cherry cobbler.

January 21: bistro meatloaf with special sauce, rich mashed potatoes, country lima beans, fresh yeast rolls, carrot cake with cream cheese frosting.

January 14: baked ziti, roasted Brussels sprout, Caesar salad, garlic bread, easy tiramisu cake.

January 28: bake potato bar

All meals include a dinner roll and salad, plus tea, peach tea, lemonade, coffee, or water.

welcome to our church family

Mary and Andrew McGill moved to Nocatee from Chattanooga this past June. They are enjoying being full time grandparents to Evelyn and Fisher, whose parents are their daughter Cathryn and husband Ricky. Their son Philip is a professional musician who makes his home in Brooklyn, NY. Mary graduated from Chattanooga State Community College and practiced as a radiological technologist before returning to college to teach the specialty until her retirement. Andrew earned degrees from Vanderbilt and the University of Georgia and enjoyed a long career in healthcare - retiring this past May from Common Spirit Memorial Health System in Chattanooga as the Chief Strategy Officer.

The McGills enjoy bicycling, swimming, hiking, traveling, a day at the beach, learning to kayak and exploring their new home of Northeast Florida. They are avid fans of the Vanderbilt Commodores, the Georgia Bulldogs and their new hometown Jaguars. Their volunteer time includes the Jesus Worldview Initiative of Belmont University's Curb Center for Faith Leadership in Nashville, for which Andrew serves as a member of the Board of Advisors. Longtime active members of Chattanooga's First Baptist, they were thrilled to find HAB and make it their new church home. They appreciate the warm welcome of new friends and look forward to being an active part of HAB's ministry to the community.

by Susan Stepp

We are excited to extend a warm HAB welcome to our newest member, **Lisa Ricker Walker**. Her parents, Al and Nancy Ricker, are long-time members at HAB. Lisa is married to Marty and they have a son named Jaco. Lisa graduated from the University of Florida in 1999. She received her Master's degree in Biology from East Carolina University. She is a project manager for a company that performs environmental studies for utilities infrastructure. Lisa loves to garden, cook, and dabbles in art. Welcome, Lisa!

by Cindy Marling

WEDNESDAY SUPPERS

Resume January 7, see schedule for meals



Thursday, January 8, 11:30 a.m.
Seafood Island in San Marco
email Steve Price, if attending,
at smpis123@gmail.com



HAB men



2nd Thursday Each Month Men's Get Together

January 18th

meet & greet

narthex

12:00 P.M.

Church
Office
will be

Closed

January 1



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4001 Hendricks Avenue
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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 or scan this QR code:



VISIT habchurch.com
for more information.

Contact us at info@habchurch.com or 904-396-7745
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Darrell Mitchell, M.B.A., Financial Manager • H. Kendell Smith, Dip.C.M., Minister of Music Emeritus