



## On Our Way Out of the Darkness

*By B. J. Hutto, Pastor*

Friends,

Depending on how quickly this note finds its way to you, we should still be within a day or two of this year's winter solstice. December 21, 2020: the darkest night of what, for many of us, has been a dark year. The good news is that most of you should receive this *after* the 21<sup>st</sup>, so the days are already lengthening as our world makes its way out of the darkness of winter and back toward spring and summer. (And if you get it before the 21<sup>st</sup>, fear not! Help is on the way!)

Help truly is on the way. As you read this, thousands of front-line healthcare workers have already received a vaccine for the COVID virus, and every day that passes sees more of our neighbors inoculated from that terrible disease. Alongside that, manufacturing plants across this country and around the world are continuing to produce millions of doses that will be distributed in the coming weeks and months. After a long, confounding year we are now rounding the corner toward something resembling the normalcy that we enjoyed before this all began. It turns out that there is, indeed, a light at the end of this tunnel.

After everything, this feels like a gift. And it is, but it's also a credit to modern science and human ingenuity. And while this virus will be reined in primarily through the hard work and selfless dedication of the science and healthcare communities, its spread has also been mitigated, even if imperfectly, by the efforts of everyday people like you and me: by social-distancing, hand-washing, mask-wearing, and general care and concern for ourselves and our loved ones. Therefore, I want to encourage you to remain diligent during this time. We are almost there, but we aren't there yet, and the most tragic thing that we can do is let down our guard out of fatigue or frustration and then catch this virus and/or spread it to those we love.

That, of course, is why we are doing all of this: love. Love of self, certainly, but also love of neighbor. As simple as it seems, persisting in these things is one of the greatest gifts that any of us can offer our neighbors, and as we turn to celebrate the gift of Christmas, the coming of the Christ child, the One whose entire life—all of his time, energy, and efforts—was given as a gift for his neighbors and for ours, then these acts of love should take on a new meaning in all of our lives. In this season, they're not just gifts; they're Christmas gifts. They are small, mundane gifts of love given to God's children in a season where you and I recognize that we have been given so much. And because of that, they are Christ-like.

Merry Christmas!

B.J.

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**B.J. Hutto**, Ph.D., Pastor • **Thomas M. Shapard**, M.Div., M.M., Minister of Music & Worship  
**Britt Hester**, M.Div., Minister of Youth and Christian Education • **Claire Kermitz Chinn**, M.Div., Minister of Children and Mission  
**Vickie M. Landers**, B.B.A., Church Administrator • **H. Kendell Smith**, Dip.C.M. Minister of Music Emeritus



## Keep Showing Up

*By Britt Hester, Minister of Youth and Christian Education*

When Courtney and I brought Micah home from the hospital four months ago, I remember being filled with so many emotions. Mostly I was excited and ready to watch our little guy grow. Admittedly, however, I also became weary of those late nights and early mornings that come with raising an infant. Somewhere in the back of your mind you know the day will come when they will sleep longer than a few hours, but when you are living in it, that day seems so far away!

In some ways, that's how it feels with the year 2020. Writing about 2020 and COVID-19 is akin to beating a dead horse. Yet, to dismiss the disruption of this year and the impact it has made on our collective mental, social, physical, and spiritual well-being would be foolish. The only way to solve a problem is to admit there is one, and 2020 has been a problem for most of us.

I would argue 2020 has been so much of a problem that it's probably made you want to quit at some point. I confess I've been there a few times myself recently. At times it feels like we're living out the film *Groundhog Day*, and some days it feels as though we will never get off the proverbial treadmill. In moments and days like these it seems like the day will never come where we experience normal again. And typically, when it feels that way, it seems to make sense to consider throwing in the towel.

I had a coach in high school who used to say, "When the going gets tough, keep showing up." I have been thinking about that saying a lot lately. I think what my coach meant when he said that was that when you are ready to quit, when you are ready to concede hope, when you are ready to forfeit your faith...keep going. When you are challenged, when you are knocked down, when you are face-to-face with defeat...keep going.

Paul understood that early believers would feel this way in the church at Galatia. He writes in Galatians 6:9-10, "So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith."

Paul's words to the Galatian believers give the same encouragement for us today. There is no doubt that 2020 has taken its toll on all of our lives. We're all tired, depleted, and perhaps skeptical about the future. Yet, Paul reminds us, "Let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, *if* we do not give up." So, friends, let us not give up on each other, on our church, on our community. Keep showing up. Keep serving and loving in Jesus' name. Keep sharing the good news of our faith. For if we do, the best is yet to come.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!  
Britt



## Hope

*By Claire Chinn, Minister of Children and Mission*

I have written and spoken in the past that I am not a big New Year's Eve or a New Year's resolution person. Now don't get me wrong—I think setting a goal and working to achieve said goal is so very important—and a lot can change in 365 days. And if you ask anybody in my family, staying up past 10:00 p.m. is near to impossible (OK, maybe 9:30).

Oh, but this year...I am ready for a new year. I am ready to get a new calendar and put 2020 behind us all. Well, at least at first thought I am ready to put 2020 in our rear view mirror and speed away. When I sit with it a little more, I am not so sure I am ready to trash 2020. Do not get me wrong; it has been one of the most challenging years we have all experienced collectively and individually.

Something I have always admired about children is the way they are able to adapt and find that little sliver of goodness or happiness in just about everything. It is something that I try to do every day, but I have to be honest—that has been extraordinarily difficult this year. Yet every time I am with our children, I am reminded of the goodness and joy that surround us.

*(continued on next page)*

**(Claire, continued)**

This year we have learned a lot; we have seen the best in humanity with sheer generosity and kindness. In the midst of everything that we lost, our helpers have become more than a sliver of hope; they have been hope personified and humanized all over the globe. It has been an extraordinarily difficult year, and it has also been a year where hope has come alive.

So maybe I will create a New Year's resolution (but I probably will not be up at midnight!). It is not a resolution to leave 2020 in the dust; instead it is a resolution to have the ability of our children to find the hope in our world at every turn. I cannot help but imagine a world where we all slow down long enough to find and be that person who carries hope with them. If I ever need help finding that hope again, I will sit down with our children and just listen to them talk and play. That type of joy is infectious and sends me out into the world, filled with hope for a better tomorrow.

Here's hoping...

Claire



**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](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzdiHq1ue_3GjixqyBFL6dA)



### Sympathy to...

- ...the friends and family of Helen Hulslander, who died Friday, November 20, 2020.
- ...Mary Jane Blanchard in the death of her aunt, Lois Prevatt, on Thursday, November 12, 2020.
- ...Judy Baggett and Sandra Hurst in the death of their sister-in-law, Carolyn Fish, on Monday, November 30, 2020. A small graveside service will be held, hopefully, on Friday, December 4.
- ...Judy Baggett in the death of her sister-in-law, Leila Baggett, on Wednesday, November 18, 2020. Leila was 96 and lived in Keystone Heights.
- ...the family and friends of Doris Hayes, who died December 5, 2020.
- ...Jan & Rollin Isbell in the death of Jan's father, David Mock, on Thursday, December 3, 2020.

<b>The Offering Plate</b>	<b>For fiscal year beginning September 1, 2020</b>		
	<b>Sept-Oct 2020</b>	<b>Nov 2020</b>	<b>Year to Date</b>
<b>Offerings &amp; Other Revenue</b>	\$188,921	\$107,277	\$296,198
<b>Expenses</b>	(196,276)	(90,608)	(286,884)
<b>Operating Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	(7,355)	(16,669)	(9,315)
<b>Budgeted Offerings &amp; Other Revenue</b>	216,681	108,341	325,022
<b>Above/(Below) Budget</b>	(27,760)	(1,063)	(28,823)
<b># Days Operating Cash on Hand (period-end)</b>		23.0	23.0

**DID YOU KNOW? You can give online at [habchurch.com](http://habchurch.com); then choose "Give."**



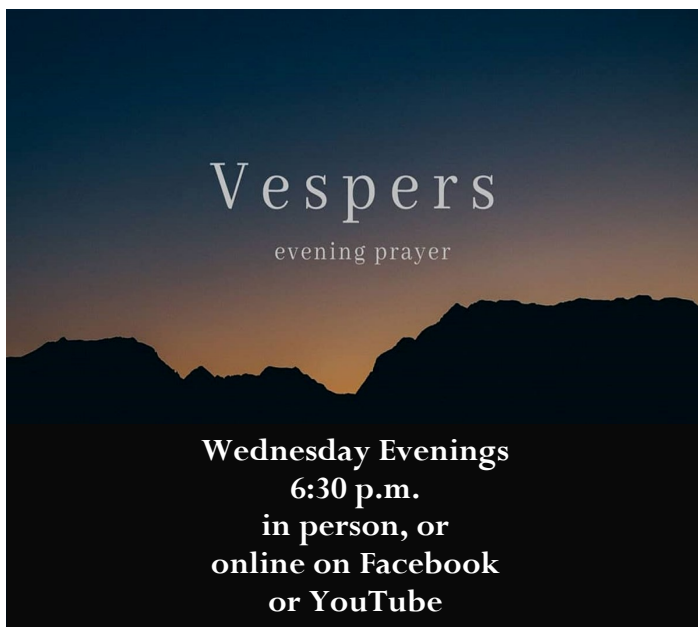
## Dinner on the Grounds



A fantastic group of HAB-ers gathered outside on Wednesday, December 16, for Dinner on the Grounds. This was a great way for us to share a meal together and still be safe. Gene & Sharon Maszy and their wonderful kitchen crew served up a delicious meal of poppyseed chicken, rice, green beans, roll, and pumpkin cake. As you can see from these pictures, a good time was had by all!







### Thursday Zoom Calls

Please join us for our church-wide open Zoom calls on Thursday nights beginning at 5:30 p.m. This is simply a time for us to catch up, see each other's faces, and share our lives together. Here is the info to join the calls (the info is the same each week):

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85306685641>

If you don't have Internet access, you can join by phone: Dial 1-646-558-8656 and then enter the meeting ID, followed by #. The meeting ID is 853 0668 5641.

## Little Friends Opens Tuesday, January 5, 2021

*By Julie Mason, Little Friends Board Chair*

Little Friends will open for school on Tuesday, January 5. As has been usual this entire school year, scrupulous safety precautions are in place, including exclusive space for Little Friends students, staff, and teachers; the use of PPE wherever appropriate by staff and teachers; daily sanitization of the classrooms constantly during the day and thoroughly after the children leave; steam clean machines which are used on all toys and items the children use all the time; HEPA filters in the classrooms; open windows when practicable; professional deep cleaning every quarter; and individual food and water containers, blankets, and other routinely used items.

If you have children's books you no longer need, Little Friends would *love* to have them. Reading is emphasized every day for every child, including our babies, so books are extremely important. We are thrilled that we've been able to re-establish library time for our older children.



*Little Friends having fun and being silly!*



*The kiddos bring their lunch every day, and we encourage parents to pack good stuff—such as left-over veggies, left-over mac 'n cheese, carrot and celery sticks, peanut butter-banana sandwiches cut into short lengths, and pieces of fruit.*

### Little Friends Heroes:

**Britt Hester**, HAB's Minister of Youth & Christian Education, photographer, and friend *extraordinaire*

**Bill Mason**, always a friend in need and constant cheerleader

**Dr. Joe Stepp**, informal medical advisor, friend, and perpetual supporter



## Kitchen Korner

By Sharon Maszy (cartoon courtesy of Gene Maszy)

When I wrote for the January *Herald* in 2020, I promised we would experience change. Little did I know what disruptive change the new year would bring! Now we celebrate the coming of 2021. What changes do we have ahead of us? There is nothing we can be sure of in this new year except this: we can draw great comfort from Scripture. This is our promise as people of faith. The Common English Bible translation of Psalm 126:4-6 says, "Lord, change our circumstances for the better, like dry streams in the desert waste! Let those who plant with tears reap the harvest with joyful shouts. Let those who go out, crying and carrying their seed, come home with joyful shouts, carrying bales of grain."

March 4, 2020, was the last regular Wednesday night fellowship meal with our HAB family. Regretfully we were not able to have our annual Christmas cooks' lunch. Special thanks to all the cooks, cashiers, servers, and office staff who shared their time and talents through the HAB kitchen ministry team.

It was December 16 before we would get back in the kitchen again to cook for our HAB family. This meal celebrated the Christmas season with a favorite menu, served a different, safer way, in a different physical location or as take-out. Change we did and did it well! Thanks go out to Dotty Pye, Anita and Lad Daniels, and Sissy and Dawson McQuaig for working their kitchen magic. And always thanks to our staff at HAB, Vladimir Lagodny and Joharen Gallardo—thank goodness their

dedication has not changed. Also, a shout-out of appreciation to our new pastor, B.J. Hutto, as he shepherds our church through the many changes that must become our new normal.

The poppyseed chicken recipe has been a favorite meal since Gene and I started cooking church suppers at St. Paul UMC in the late 1980s. Maybe you would like to make it at home for your friends and family.



**Poppyseed Chicken**  
(8 servings)

**4 whole chicken breasts, split, boneless, skinless**

Season with salt and pepper.

Bake in a 350-deg. oven for 25-35 minutes

Cut into bite-size pieces.

Place in a 9 x 13 casserole pan.

**2 cans cream of chicken soup**

**1 ½ cups sour cream**

Mix together. Pour over chicken.

**1 stick butter, melted**

**1 tube Ritz crackers, crushed**

**2 Tbsp. poppy seeds**

Mix together and sprinkle over chicken and cream sauce.

Bake at 350 deg. until browned, approx. 35-45 minutes.

This is good served over rice.





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Bible study classes, upcoming events,  
new books at the library,  
Wednesday night menus, and more.

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