About This Issue:
This summer has been an exciting time in the life of HBBC. From renovations and repairs to camps and mission trips, we have been changing and growing as individuals and as a congregation. In this issue you’ll find excitement about what God did through our missions and ministries, encouragement to enjoy the rest we often equate with summer, and opportunities to get connected so that God can use you to make a difference in the coming seasons. What exciting transformations we have seen!

If you have any comments or ideas for future issues of Faith Points, please email faithpoints@hbhc.org.

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Membership and Attendance

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In Memoriam
Mrs. Phyllis Russell, May 23, 2017
Mrs. Irva Daniels, June 2, 2017

New Members
Benji & Phelicia Flanagan joined 4/30/17
Alan Bergold joined 5/7/17
Debra Lisk joined 5/7/17
Amy Bee joined 5/14/17
Edie Cash joined 5/14/17

Cover Image:
Students lead worship in the San Fernando Cathedral as part of the San Antonio Mission Team. They ministered throughout the city of San Antonio in a number of different ways.
Stories from the Field

From Raleigh to Romania, our congregation has served in a great variety of ways this summer. Here are some of the stories of how God has used your gifts and many talents in the mission field.

ARKANSAS

I was blessed when we were visiting with Helen and her adopted daughter who is now 23, I believe. She is both physically and mentally challenged, but the sweetest girl you would ever want to meet. Miss Helen has fostered over 100 children in her lifetime, but adopted Jo Lisa. While we were there, Jo Lisa grinned big when I asked her to write something in the notebook she had with her. I had written a simple sentence: “Today is Monday.” She copied it with pride and with a big smile on her face. I was also emotionally affected when I watched Miss Helen’s face light up with pure love as she listened with pride as Jo Lisa would join in our conversation.

I think it is also interesting that other HBBC members want to be involved in the work in Helena even though they cannot go. Ruth Hines gave 12 copies of the devotional book, *Jesus Calling*, which Carol Barksdale gifted to several people in the community. The books were received with much appreciation.

-Linda Giles

SAN ANTONIO

When our youth choir began their warm-up in the San Fernando Cathedral, I knew we were about to experience something special. Perhaps the acoustics inside the nave of the cathedral were that perfect. But I also think the youth could feel the sense of awe and holiness cathedrals are meant to provoke. Their voices blended and reverberated around the church unlike they ever had in our choir room.

That brief concert to God and a few penitents set the tone for our worship for the rest of the week in San Antonio, but perhaps not in the way you would think. While it was extremely impressive to watch the youth lead in worship through songs, skits and dramatic readings of scripture, the most special part of each worship service was when they scattered throughout the gathering to fellowship with the worshippers. The youth never hesitated to approach with a warm smile the residents of the Meadows Retirement Community, or the homeless of the Haven for Hope, or the intellectually disabled of the Unicorn Center. They shook hands, embraced, and conversed like old friends. The atmosphere of joy was infectious.

I was reminded how many of the parables of Jesus began with the phrase, “The kingdom of heaven is like…” Well, the kingdom of heaven is like that, a joyful gathering of praise comprised of every type of worshipper, all of us loved equally by God, and all of us saved equally by the grace of Jesus Christ.

-Ward Page

Our mission teams had the opportunity not only to work, but also to worship while they were away. From singing to cathedrals to leading Bible Studies with translators, God provided many opportunities through summer missions to share His truth.

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ARKANSAS
We have been hoping and praying for more involvement and leadership in camp by local folks and this year has seen a major movement in that area. With a shortage of outside swim instructors, the second week of camp has more local teachers than outside help for the first time, and most of them are young folks who learned to swim in camp. Also, all of the lifeguards are swim camp graduates. God is using long-term trust and friendships to break down barriers and accomplish great things.

-Bobby Hall

SUMMER ARTS CAMP
Cut, chop, slice, poke...munch, munch, munch. These were some of the sights and sounds from the cooking class at Summer Arts Camp. Our campers spent the week learning basic kitchen skills, prepping and sampling different foods and working together as a team. The theme for the week was Cooking Dinner for Mom and Dad, which allowed them to work toward a common goal and then share and enjoy the fruits of their labor during the Friday evening festivities where the prepared food was served to our family and friends.

Each day I marveled at the wonderment as the campers learned about different foods: how to prepare them and how they tasted. Campers cut with real knives and washed dishes in the big dish machine, and they handled each task with gusto, enthusiasm, and more water than a waterpark splash zone.

On Friday, we had guest Chef Jay Z from Charlotte present a program designed by ACF’s Chef and Child division entitled Five a Day the Color Way—teaching the importance of including five portions of fruits and vegetables in our daily food choices. The campers enjoyed the interactive program and had valuable lessons to take away.

Most precious was the look of excitement on Friday evening when the campers and families entered the Fellowship Hall Art Gallery and sampled the food the children prepared while touring the gallery of artwork on display: a beautiful representation of the artistry of life.

I am looking forward to future opportunities to share the love of food and learning with these wonderful young people.

-JoAnn Rey

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**Summer Break?**

Back in the early 80’s James Taylor recorded a song about summer. In it he speaks of sandals and straw hats and cold beverages. “It’s my favorite time of the year,” he crooned, “and I’m just glad that I’m here.”

Many of us feel the same. We look forward to a slower pace, a more relaxed rhythm. During the rest of the year we rush around at breakneck speed, but summer is the season to slow down, catch your breath, and take a break. Susan and I had the chance to do this recently, and what a difference it made! I hope you can do the same.

But there’s not been much of a summer break at church. Some of our programs have slowed a bit, but other opportunities have stepped up to fill the gap. Take a look at just a few of the summer activities at HBBC:

- In June we hosted our first Summer Arts Camp for children. What a success! The halls of our church were filled with happy children learning a host of new skills. Sarah, Patty, and their team of volunteers did an excellent job of creating this opportunity for our children and their families. I congratulate them on a job well done!

- We have sent out mission teams to Cuba, San Antonio, Arkansas, and Romania. Recently, I listened to Larry Dickens telling the story of the impressive work done by our youth in San Antonio. I hope you will have the opportunity to hear about it, too. We have some amazing youth in our church and we are proud of their commitment to Christ. Theirs is just one story of the significant mission work done by our congregation this summer.

- In July we completed our sixth Habitat for Humanity project. John McGrady and his team are to be commended for their excellent work. We were pleased to welcome Grace Church for All Nations as a faith partner in this project. The Bioshi family is a beautiful family and we are delighted that they will enjoy the fruit of our labor for many years to come.

- The Summer Concert Series has provided a welcome opportunity for entertainment, fellowship, and refreshments for many people in our congregation and community. We are grateful to Patty Pace for her work in creating these programs.

- Speaking of music, I also want to give a shout-out to Tyler Ingram. All summer long Tyler has been moving, organizing, and cataloguing our music library and instrument inventory. What a monumental task! Thanks, Tyler, for taking on this substantial project and doing it with such diligence and good humor.

In addition to all of this, we have taken advantage of the summer months to do some needed renovations and improvements in our facilities. The most significant projects are being done in our youth area in the Family Life Center and room 204 in the main education building. Quite a transformation has taken place in these areas! We have also added new paint, carpet, and furnishings to rooms 11, 24-26, 38-40, and 106. I salute Greg Holmes and his construction team. Not only have they done beautiful work, but they have also done it in a most timely manner. When you have the chance, take a look at what we have done. I think you will be pleased.

These are but a few of the things that we have been doing in recent months at HBBC. I wouldn’t exactly call it a summer break, but I’m glad for all that we’ve done.

*David Hailey*

*Pastor*
ARKANSAS

We first met Curly and Nora Moton in 2004 when we did some work on their house, and we have visited them each year since. On one such visit, Nora received a phone call and said to the caller that she couldn’t talk then because her “white friends were visiting”.

During a visit several years later, Nora received a phone call and said she couldn’t talk then because her “missionary friends were visiting”. This year (2017), as we were leaving, Nora called out to her neighbor, “come meet my family.” It is truly an honor to be raised to “family”.

- Bob Barksdale

ARKANSAS

My first trip to Helena was in 2004 with my family. I started working with children in the pool (my “concrete pond”) and I still continue doing the swim program. The children and adults who come to the lessons have enthusiasm and trust that they will learn and be safe in the water. I have been blessed to know that I can make a difference in the pool. We end each lesson with a prayer and a shout, “Put your Hope in God.” Together for Hope has helped to change many lives. Thank you, HBBC, for this opportunity.

-Elsie James

ROMANIA

As the team prepares to depart in less than a few days, we continue to feel God’s presence in working out the details. Our suitcases are packed and we are learning more about each other and the gifts that each team member brings to the group. When we arrive in Romania, we will meet others that will help us to lead a five day camp with children who have never been out of the city. Our prayer is that when we leave, they will know of God’s unconditional love for them, that they are made in His image, and that He has a plan and purpose for them. We can’t wait to share these stories with you when we return. We know God is definitely up to something amazing.

-Kristen Muse

From the blessings ministry in Helena, Arkansas, to a children’s camp in Romania, people with many different gifts set aside time from their summers and traveled away from their families to share the love of Christ with others.
The Bible tells us that Jesus “grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52). Certainly, as Jesus grew up, studied the scriptures, and went to church with His parents, He learned more and more about the story of God. We can imagine that His curiosity grew as He discovered new things and His questions led to a deeper understanding of God and His role in the world. The children and youth at Hayes Barton are growing the same way that Jesus did, and we want to be intentional about how we teach the stories and truths that are central to our faith.

Over the past year, Ward Page and I have been working together to create a discipleship plan for children and youth that highlights the key lessons and gospel truths that we hope all children learn during their time at Hayes Barton. The plan acts as a road map of sorts, identifying the “thresholds” that every child goes through and directing where we focus our resources and energy at each stage. These core truths are taught and communicated through a variety of programs and ministries like Sunday School, choir and missions, Sunday night Bible Study, camps, retreats, and worship experiences, as well as one-on-one conversations and relationships with volunteers and leaders. We have identified three thresholds (preschool, grade school, and high school) that children will go through and what concepts we believe are most important at each stage:

By the time a child leaves the preschool ministry, there are four things we hope he or she knows:

1. **God Made Me.** God made the world and everything in it, including you. He made you unique and special. There is no one else exactly like you.

2. **God loves me.** God loves you beyond your wildest imagination. Our prayer is that everything that happens at church, from the volunteers who rock children in the nursery to the songs they sing in choir to the stories they hear in Sunday School, communicates that truth. God is love, and they are loved by God.

3. **Jesus wants to be my friend forever.** Jesus is always with you and wants to be your friend. You can count on Jesus!

4. **The Bible teaches me about God.** The Bible is a special book full of stories about God and His work in the world. The stories in the Bible are true, and we can trust what the Bible says about God.

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As children grow and their understanding of God deepens, their relationships with God become more personal. They begin to understand their role in the relationship and how their choices impact that relationship.

1. **God wants a relationship with me.** God’s desire is to be in relationship with us. That relationship cannot be one-sided. It involves us receiving God’s love and grace and responding with love, obedience, and faithfulness.

2. **Jesus died on the cross for my sins.** By grade school, children are capable of understanding the concept of sin. We teach that sin is when we choose to do things our way instead of God’s way. We are all sinners, and the Bible tells us that the price of sin is death. However, God loves us so much that He sent His son, Jesus, to pay that price for us.

3. **Jesus invites me to follow Him.** The invitation to follow Jesus is open to everyone, but each person has to make that choice for him or herself. Following Jesus and becoming a Christian is a lifelong commitment to live like Jesus wants us to live and seek His will for our lives.

Finally, throughout their time in youth ministry, we hope that their faith ignites a passion to share what they know about God and live as His hands and feet in the world. By the time a student graduates from high school, we hope that these truths are central to their faith:

1. **My life has purpose in Christ.** God created you with unique gifts and abilities to do His work in the world. God has a plan for your life, and God is able to accomplish great things through you.

2. **Christ’s love compels me to respond.** We can’t just receive God’s love. Instead, we are compelled to go out and share that love with other people.

3. **Christ calls me to make disciples and serve people.** As Christians, we are instructed to share our faith so that others may also know about God and make the choice to follow Him. We can share about God through both our words and our actions.

We understand it is a unique and special privilege to watch our children and youth cross each threshold, learning new things about God and experiencing His incredible love as they grow. Our job is to teach them the truths that are central to our faith and have been a part of the Christian story since the very beginning. It is a sacred and holy calling, and we are thankful for the gift.
One woman’s overwhelming sense of God’s leading, along with the work of three congregations, is instrumental in giving a Hurricane Matthew survivor new hope and a rebuilt house.

Judy Weinbrenner and Inez Bullock had never met until the October 2016 storm brought together their lives in a special way. Ms. Bullock’s house was devastated when the Lumber River rose, flooding the town of Fair Bluff. More than 120 miles away in Raleigh, Mrs. Weinbrenner felt a deep desire and commitment to help.

Using a monetary gift she had set aside for a worthy cause, Judy moved forward to be the hands and feet of Jesus. She knew about recovery and rebuilding work being done by North Carolina Baptist Men/Baptists on Mission.

“After hearing the plight of flood survivors,” Judy explains, “something tugged at my heart strings and the next thing I knew I was in Fair Bluff standing in the shell of a house. It had been stripped down to only studs and floor joists with the ground staring me in the face. I wondered, ‘Now what are you going to do?’ We refused to be daunted by the enormous challenge as we began the plan for rebuilding literally on a ‘wing and a prayer.’”

Judy and her husband, George, members of Raleigh’s Hayes Barton Baptist Church, asked fellow church member and Disaster Relief Volunteer Jerry Causey to identify a survivor they could help.

Jerry sought input from Bill Martin, a site coordinator for Baptists on Mission. Bill shared Ms. Bullock’s story and suggested her house in Fair Bluff for the rebuild effort.

Judy recalls, “As eager as we were to get started with the rebuild, I wanted to personally learn about the woman who lived there—about how she had grown from a little girl with hopes and dreams to the woman of today and how her family had been instrumental in who she had become. I wanted to know how her faith had influenced her in this time of crisis. I learned all these things and more as she showed us humility and appreciation for the work everyone was doing. I learned the true meaning of Acts 20:35.”

When the opportunity to rebuild the wood-sided house was accepted, Jerry and the Weinbrenners determined they would have to reach out for help. That’s when the congregations of Westwood Baptist Church in Cary and Trinity Baptist Church in Raleigh agreed to join the rebuild project.

“Baptists on Mission encouraged churches to adopt a hurricane-damaged house. Joining with other congregations in our area to rebuild a house seemed like a good way to go,” said Louis Pearce of Trinity Church.

Jim Bridges, missions committee chairperson at Westwood, came forward to involve his congregation in the rebuild effort. “I believe that our faith...”

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calls us to serve those in need. In my thanksgiving for God’s blessing I cannot help but serve,” said Bridges.

The Weinbrenners, Causey, Pearce and Bridges met to formulate their plans and coordinate congregational efforts. Aided by additional monies from individuals and a church mission fund, the work soon began. John McGrady, a retired engineer and Hayes Barton member, drew up new plans for the house. The blueprint included three bedrooms, a bath, kitchen, living room, and utility closet.

During the almost five-month rebuild effort, teams from Westwood, Trinity and Hayes Barton churches worked to complete their assigned tasks at the house. Contractors were employed to oversee some components of the rebuild.

Everything in the interior of Ms. Bullock’s restored house is new—walls, ceilings, flooring, electrical wiring, plumbing, lighting, appliances, and cabinets. Also, the house has a new roof, windows, exterior doors, heating and air conditioning systems. A new bathroom vanity was custom built and donated by Sorrell’s Cabinetry of Lillington.

The Weinbrenners stayed involved in the day-to-day construction efforts. They made numerous trips to the Fair Bluff house to purchase needed supplies and help in the construction process.

“My goal was to make her house a cozy little nest with a few state of the art enhancements so she would have joy and comfort living in the familiar spot where she grew up,” said Judy.

Ms. Bullock agrees. “I just love my new home. I cannot thank Judy and all the people who worked here enough for what they have done. I am blessed and thank God.”
At 8 AM on Thursday morning a large crowd of workers gathered around buckets of nails, hammers, and hard hats outside the Bioshi family’s Habitat house in preparation for a long day of work. These workers didn’t look like your typical construction workers; in fact, most of them were far from experienced in the field of construction. Some of them were administrators and accountants, some of them were chefs and fitness coaches, some of them were ministers and graphic designers. But they all had the same goal in mind: volunteering time and energy to help the Bioshi family and show them the love of Christ. Throughout the day, these volunteers from Hayes Barton Baptist Church worked together to weatherproof the house, install several windows, and put up framing in the laundry room, bedrooms, and other main rooms.

Habitat for Humanity’s mission is “seeking to put God’s love into action” by “bringing people together to build homes, communities, and hope.” The partnership between Habitat for Humanity and Hayes Barton Baptist Church has had a tremendous impact on the Bioshi family. The Bioshis’ new Habitat house provides more room for their family as well as greater stability and homeownership. Rick Beech, Vice President of the Habitat for Humanity of Wake County, commented on the difference this will make in the Bioshi family’s lives: “Homeownership is one of the greatest wealth generators for families. On average a homeowner’s net worth is 36 times more than a renter’s. The equity they earn in their home may enable the kids to get to college! The stability and pride of living in a good home and neighborhood will be a boost to their education. I believe they have also gained even greater confidence by going through the sweat equity and homebuyer education classes and especially working with the church volunteers and fellow Congolese at Grace Church for All Nations.” Through the process of this Habitat project, the family has put 50 hours into homebuyer preparation classes and around 200 hours of sweat equity. Many volunteers have had the privilege of working alongside this family throughout the past few months and getting to know the Bioshis’ personally.

The Bioshi family committed to give hours of sweat equity and to complete home owner training into the Habitat for Humanity system as part of their path to homeownership.
For Habitat for Humanity to exist, volunteer work is essential to the operation of projects. Because Habitat only has a few people on site, a lot of the work was done by volunteers from the church and community. Hayes Barton Baptist Church had several weekends of volunteers working long days on the Bioshis’ house. Other volunteers included groups from Wake County Public Schools and locals from the community. According to Rick, “Volunteers love to make a difference in people’s lives. When volunteers meet this family and work with them on their home they get a great sense of accomplishment knowing that they are helping this family become homeowners.” John McGrady was one of the most dedicated volunteers for this project, showing up with a core group of volunteers nearly every workday for about ten weeks to complete the house. He began helping when the foundation was laid and worked all the way through to completion and dedication on Saturday July 15th. What stood out to him most was that many of the volunteers were in their late 60’s or 70’s and were still offering their time and energy!

Bruce Thompson was another one of the many volunteers who offered work on the Habitat house. He and other members of the Koininia Sunday School class provided a meal for the day and worked hard painting shutters, helping clean, and completing other odd jobs.

Bruce commented, “Our Sunday School class is a very giving class. It was a very meaningful experience to do something together for someone else. When you do things for other people, you don’t think about the difficulties. It was so good to be able to do something to help someone even though it was a hot day!” He also says he appreciated being able to share time and conversation with the Bioshi family as well as other young people working on the job site.

With church members and staff volunteering their time, their energy, and even their money, God has used many resources and people to bless the Bioshi family and their house. Hayes Barton Baptist Church has come together to transform lives, show the love of Christ to a family in need, and glorify God in their work for the Bioshi family.

From foundation to siding to a finished house and a special dedication ceremony, members of Hayes Barton Baptist, Grace Church for All Nations, and the Bioshi family worked and prayed together to build this home and glorify God.
The weather might not feel like it, but fall is just around the corner and the change of season brings on exciting things in the life of the church. It is a time to renew, refresh, re-energize and reconnect. It is a good time to invite a friend to church and to recommit to the things that matter most. This fall we will offer opportunities to do just that. We hope you jump in with us to make a difference for Christ and to find ways to be a part of the transforming process of following Christ. Take a look at the exciting things that will begin in September and commit now to be a part!

**Lectionary-Based Sunday School Class**

Join us at 9:45 each Sunday, starting August 27, as we explore the lectionary texts for the week and how they apply to our daily lives. The class will meet on the ground floor in room 24.

**Men's Sunday School Class**

Are you interested in gathering around the table with a group of men of all ages to delve deeply into the Scriptures? If so, then this is the class for you. If you are interested, please call or email Kristen Muse (kmuse@hbbc.org).

**Fall Community Kick-off**

Wednesday night programs will begin with a night of fun. Learn about the missions and ministries at HBBC and in the community and enjoy food trucks, inflatables, ponies, and carnival games. Mark your calendars for Wednesday, September 6, and invite a friend to join you!

**Screenagers**

Join us the evening of Sunday, October 1, for a screening of the award-winning documentary, Screenagers, which addresses how best to navigate the world of technology and social media with your children. The event is free and open to the community, and dinner will be provided. We will follow up with a six-week Wednesday night series beginning October 18.

**World Communion Sunday**

Plan to be a part of worship on Sunday, October 1, as we join together with Grace Church for All Nations to worship together.

**Membership Matters**

Our next 5-week session begins on Sunday, September 10. If you are interested in learning more about HBBC as well as meeting others that are new to the church, this is the class for you. Meet with us on Sunday mornings during the Sunday School hour.
Beyond My View: Out of this World Summer Reading
Sharln Chapman

I hope you’ve noticed the expanding solar system in the CRC. There are hundreds of stars hanging in the CRC and each one represents one hour read by the children who participated in Summer Reading. I am beyond proud of the impressive accomplishments of these children.

The top three readers each week have received special prize experiences: a pizza lunch with Patty, breakfast with Dr. Hailey, crafts with Emily Patton, the driving range with David Keel, a park outing with Kristen, Marbles with Sarah, and a press pass with Danny Musten. Ward Page took the week two winners to Moe’s and a movie. He expressed that he’s “proud of the kids, and happy to have the opportunity to celebrate their efforts.” He said of reading, “if you enjoy reading you’ll never not have a place to go.”

Caroline Patton said she loves summer reading because “I can exercise my brain and get smarter.” She continued saying “I’m excited to read every week because I like the prizes.” Caroline’s right. Reading does exercise your brain. It also brings learning and exposure to new concepts, an expanded vocabulary, and a boost to the imagination.

I love how C.S. Lewis sums up the importance of reading. He says, “But in reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I see with a myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do.”

Please make sure to congratulate the participating children who have worked so hard this summer and encourage them to continue reading and exploring the power, majesty, and creativity of God.

Where does it go?

Where does it all go? How does it move so fast? Why did it seem to go so slow when I was a child?

What am I talking about? You might have guessed it by now. Time. That is what I am talking about.

As I write this column, I am vastly aware of how the summer has seemed to fly by. When I was younger summer just seemed to hang on forever. Remember that phrase, “the lazy days of summer”? Summer has seemed like anything but lazy around here. With the construction noise above my office and the planning in preparation for the fall, the church has been quite active. Not only here, but throughout the world.

Not only have mission teams gone out, but YOU have been to so many places. I’ve heard about travels and vacations as well as hospital stays and visits with loved ones, and every time I hear your stories I see how God was present in the going. Whether it was a visit under circumstances that you weren’t expecting or a time of celebration, our faith has been challenged and strengthened this summer.

This journey of faith is one of twists and turns, expected and unexpected, challenging and joyful, and yet in the end we can rejoice because the journey was shared. We didn’t take it alone, God went with us and hopefully He sent someone else to travel with us: a friend, a loved one, a stranger who blessed us.

Where does it all go? Why does it move so fast? Maybe because we allow it to instead of stopping and enjoying the journey of faith. As we move into this final month of summer, my prayer for myself and for you is that we take a few moments to just enjoy this journey of faith that we are on. Let’s stop and see what God is up to and how He is preparing us for the next step ahead.

Kristen Muse
Associate Pastor
The Beauty of Vacation

I once sat at an outdoor café in Rome, enjoying a breakfast of a flaky croissant with a lemony glaze and an espresso. I couldn’t decide whether or not I wanted to wear my jacket. It was spring, so the morning was cool, but the sunlight peeking over the tops of the nearby buildings warmed me. It had also rained the night before, so water droplets glinted everywhere. Even though I was one of only a few patrons, the waiter had seemed in a rush to serve me when he deftly placed my spread down in front of me.

I don’t know why, but I was amused by the number of plates and utensils required to serve me a single pastry and coffee. I had three plates: one for my croissant, one for my espresso cup, and a third for the creamer and sugar. I had very ornate silverware too, for such a generic café. A knife, a fork, and two ludicrously small spoons, one for the sugar and one to stir. The cream and sugar were of course served in a tiny metal pitcher and bowl respectively.

I thought it was all overkill. Had I been at home, I likely might have eaten the pastry while standing over the counter. I certainly wouldn’t have had any type of coffee drink, but you know, “when in Rome...” I would have had some tea or milk, perhaps even to go, eating and drinking along the drive. But that’s one of the differences when traveling outside the United States. We Americans live to work. We’re efficient in silly ways, like eating on the go. But in Italy, for example, there’s an art form to slowing down and taking a break to enjoy little things like a meal or a conversation with an old friend over coffee.

It’s funny how we remember the details from certain experiences. Most days I have trouble remembering what I ate for breakfast, but I can recall with precise detail my breakfast that morning in Rome. I think that’s the beauty of vacation. When we travel to a place not within our routine, we can experience life to a higher degree. It’s not just about having fun somewhere... well... not here. Vacation helps us take pleasure in creation and in our loved ones, delighting in the abandonment of responsibility and labor.

After my breakfast that day in Rome I visited the catacombs of St. Sebastian. It was a guided tour, but the tour guide’s accent was so thick I could only make out a little of his English. It didn’t matter though. My other senses were on full-record mode. I remember the smell of the catacombs, earthy and damp, like a cellar. I remember the soft crunching of the dirt beneath my sneakers. It was cool and somehow humid, and the air moved through the tunnels like they were breathing. The spiritual significance wasn’t lost on me either. Peter and Paul supposedly fled to these catacombs during the persecutions of the first century. And I was walking in their same footsteps.

God created the universe in six days, and then rested. I don’t think it was because God needed to recuperate. God is God, and therefore must have an infinite supply of energy, I assume. No, God wanted to delight in Creation. I imagine the first humans enjoying their Eden. There was no work. There was no toil, no deadlines, no stress. Each moment was literally the best thing they had yet seen, because they were seeing it through new eyes.

So enjoy your vacations. Take pleasure in your time off. Take note of your heightened senses and remember the paradise we were meant for.

Ward Page

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Hayes Barton Baptist Church
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