



Kirk's last sermon at Hill City Church on Jan 14th.

## Farwell to Hill City Church

When we first moved to Rock Hill—11 years ago—we knew where we were going to go to church. Most of the artists we knew were going to Hill City Church. It was planted around 2011 and had already been meeting together for a year or more when we arrived. In fact we had attended a few services when we visited during our trips from Florida to Maryland when my parents were still living there. We loved the church and we loved its mission—"Pursuing the Truth, Goodness, and Beauty of Jesus for the flourishing of Rock Hill, SC" (In recent years we adjusted it to "Following Jesus for the flourishing of Rock Hill, SC"). It's a great statement.

Whenever we would share that mission with friends, especially artists, they loved it—they got excited and understood the depth of

meaning—namely, to pursue all that Jesus was, is, and will be here on earth so that those around us might be blessed. Jesus as Truth, Jesus as Goodness, and Jesus as Beauty—all for God's glory, and our neighbor's benefit.

Hill City has been very good to us—us personally, and those believers who are artists as well. It was never the intention that Hill City become a church of artists (artists were never a majority but there were a lot). That ebbed and flowed through the years, but it never lost its ability to welcome a population that has always seemed "fringy" to the church. And not everyone who the members of "Hill City" ministered to darkened our door. But they knew who we were and whose we were—and their attitudes changed toward Christianity (we listed some of that in our last newsletter).

Friday Arts Project was not a ministry of Hill City Church, but it was a ministry adopted by them. As followers of Jesus who run an arts organization, Sarah and I have always invited our brothers and sisters in local churches to "show up" at the events we do. Because we believe as ambassadors of Christ—whether they like the art or not, whether they "get" the art or not—Jesus shows up. Their presence shows the art community that they are "neighbors" and that is the first step in a relationship. That means Sarah and I—and our staff of Friday Arts Project—aren't the only Christians these artists know.

All of this makes it sad that Hill City Church is officially closing its doors in February, a decision we are supporting and think God is leading us all toward.

We are sad for several reasons. One is the relationships we have with those in Hill City will change—not all of them, but some will. We will not see and we won't be in fellowship with people to the same degree. Another reason is that my part in teaching, helping with sermons, will end. I've enjoyed being a part of a team bringing God's Word to brothers and sisters (I don't know how pastors do it week in and week out!). And a large amount of financial support for Sarah and I personally will end as Hill City has been very generous to us.

We rejoice for good reason too! God has worked and will work in ways beyond the formal bounds of structured churches and He will continue beyond the end of Hill City. We also get to end our church well. There are probably thousands of stories of churches fading, going away, or ending in much worse ways. Though somber we close Hill City with confidence God is with us. We look forward to God expanding His ability to work through us and the others of Hill City—whichever church they chose to attend. And last, though the loss of a large amount of support is coming for us, yet behind any worry of mine is God's presence letting me know that He knows—and somehow I don't think He'll remain inactive. It's strange to have such a relationship with someone I "don't see", and yet have the sense of His presence that I do—it is humbling.

Would you pray for us and our Hill City community? Praise God for the way He worked through Hill City Church for 12+ years. Praise Him for the way He worked in/through Sarah and I and

provided for us. Praise Him for what He has in store for us and our Hill City community. Ask God that He would guide all of us to new home churches that preach the Gospel. Ask Him to continue to draw our art neighbors to Himself through these other local bodies. And pray that He would continue to provide for Sarah and I specifically, recovering (and exceeding) the large monthly amount that will end.

I would be remiss & unwise if I did not ask you all that maybe you are to be a part of how God wants to restore some of that monthly loss. If so, please consider a monthly increase, or starting, or restarting a monthly amount. Regardless of what you decide we are grateful for your financial support and prayers.

My mind wanders to and is encouraged by the opening stanza of Alfred Tennyson's poem "In Memoriam":

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,  
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,  
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,  
Believing where we cannot prove;

Blessings—

*Sarah and Kirk*

## Please Pray

- » Pray the prayer with us that we try to pray before every event, "*Jesus, help us be a part of someone's next step toward you.*"
- » Praise God for the way He used us and the others in "Hill City" to impact the art community. Pray for our fellow "Hill City" members that they will find a sweet place to belong in a local body of believers.
- » Please pray that God would continue to provide for our financial support. We dearly love this ministry we've been a part of here and would like continue to be a part of it.

If you would like to partner with us in ministry, visit our giving page on Cru's website:

[www.cru.org/0402593](http://www.cru.org/0402593)

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