

# Letters of ENCOURAGEMENT

God Loves You  No Matter What

September 8, 2021

A Note from Steve McElheny

**Dear Friends,**

My first question when Pastor April asked me to serve as the Chair of Trustees was simple. "Why me?"

After a long hiatus away from the church, I had returned to HUMC to help ensure that my mother Joan was able to attend each week. **Mom counted on coming to church every week. She counted on interacting with her friends. After a few years, I started to count on it for myself as well.**



Sometimes during the sermon, I would sense a message directly for me. I remember a sermon that Pastor April gave during that year that reminded us, "It's OK to say no." A couple of weeks later, something particularly unexpected happened. Right in the middle of the sermon, I saw a vision of my father and Jesus talking together and then saying to me, "You need to get more involved." I knew I could say no, but part of me also wanted to say YES.

Still, I wasn't expecting that "get more involved" meant this level of leadership. I was shocked. I had been serving on the Finance Committee for less than a year. Wasn't there someone else better equipped to lead the Trustees? How about this person or that person? Surely, they had more experience than me. I requested to meet with Pastor April with my list of questions.

Ultimately, I said yes. **In addition to the clear nudge I was getting from my father, Jesus, and Pastor April, I realized that I already had ideas forming about what we could do as a church.** I had grown up in the congregation. I knew that the building had seen better days. I also knew that if we could find the finances, we could make some big improvements that might help other people find their way back to church.

Two months into my new role, COVID hit.



I confess, when I first walked back into church several years ago and saw the screens I thought, “Ugh.” I was a more traditional person. Why not just open the hymnal or read directly from the Bible?

**The pandemic really showed me why we needed technology** and that I was living in the past.

One of our first major projects was to ensure we had reliable internet in the Sanctuary building. We had been using a long-range Wi-Fi signal from the

Warehouse 839 building that was very unreliable. The phone system in the Preschool was also linked to the network, which meant they couldn’t dial 911 if it went down. With some help from Chris Sexton and some designated gifts, we found a good price and were able to install high speed fiber internet in the entire Sanctuary Building.

**Reliable online worship on Sundays has been a godsend for my mom.** With her health deteriorating, she can’t sit through a whole hour of worship. While she still misses her friends, she can now be at home and at least get connected and feel the presence of the church, the music, and the people. I’m still managing to “get her to church” each Sunday as we sit together in her living room and connect online.

I’ve been involved in business since I was a paperboy at 14 years old. **It’s always been ingrained in me: *You don’t just think about what’s happening now, you need a long-term vision of things.*** I knew we had fallen behind the eight ball on some of that forward planning, but with the work of our team, we started to address that. We installed new windows and a new air conditioning unit at the Whispering Oak parsonage. We addressed the leaks on the far side wall of the Warehouse 839 building. We started saving for the next big boiler repair.

**This year, we’ve been busy with some more visible projects, starting with a sprucing up of the Social Hall.** It’s the first impression of our building when you are coming for worship, an event, or for Preschool, and the ceiling and bulletin boards were very dated. The ceiling was repaired early this summer. The new paint went up last week. More to come with window treatments and updated pictures on the walls.



This month, we will also be freshening up the Warehouse 839 building with a new coat of paint. You'll also see the installation of new external signage across the entire property this fall, including a new digital sign on Main Street. This last project is the final fulfillment of the work we set out to do in our Capital Campaign seven years ago.

**I'm hopeful about the future of the church.** Five years ago this month, we began worshipping together in a new way. We moved our schedule to three services. Pastor April and Pastor Karen began preaching and leading worship in both spaces. The sermons in the Sanctuary building and the Warehouse 839 building were the same. Sometimes, we were asked to step out of our comfort zones and worship in Warehouse 839 and vice versa. By bringing worship together, it brought the whole church together.

I continue to see that even though I'm worshipping online. Even though we aren't able to gather in large groups, I see the blending of things and more people talking together and connecting. We worship online AND in person as one church. I see new members joining. Even through this pandemic, people felt like it was important to continue their tithes and offerings. When a lot of people were financially hurt, they still felt it was important to support their church.

All of this is part of the reason I've said yes to serve one more year as the Chair of Trustees. **God still has work for me to do, and God is doing new things with our church.**

Grateful to be in service,

Steve



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