



January 5, 2022
A Note from Pastor April

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year!

I've always loved the turning of the calendar and the beginning of a new year.

A fresh start.

A chance to release the past and embrace what may be ahead.

A new chapter in the story.

It's also a celebration. We've made it through another year.

A year of challenge and resilience. A year of unlearning and stepping into new places.

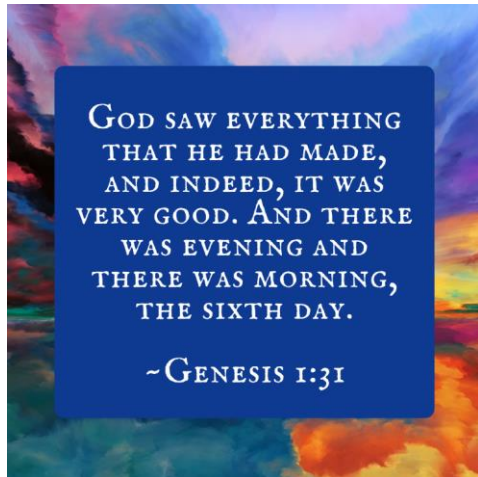
A celebration that we get another year to live on this planet.

It feels important to mark the moment.

This past Sunday, we began our journey through **The Great Story** of the Old Testament with the first chapter of Genesis.

If you missed the message, you can catch it here (<https://hilliardumc.org/livestream/>). We're doing this series with my friend the Rev. Brian Maguire and his congregation, Fairmont Presbyterian in Dayton. You can even watch Brian's message from Sunday here. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Qkv6NStLXQ>)





Goodness is all over this first chapter. Each new part of creation is celebrated for its goodness. And then, on the final day of 7, God rests and sets aside an entire day to enjoy what's been created.

Right from the beginning, even time itself has been marked as holy and sacred.

Inevitably, a new year invites us to consider how our time will be spent. This becomes even more nuanced during a pandemic.

What will receive priority and attention?

How will we move through this sacred time in ways that are life-giving AND safe?

Who will we spend this time with?

How will we do this with love?

I wonder what God has in store for you this year. In what new ways will this sacred gift of time open new possibilities for you and those you love? I wonder what we might have to let go of in order to make room for the new. I wonder what we'll learn. I wonder how each of us will be different when the calendar turns to 2023.

This Sunday, we'll move to the second part of the story in Genesis 2.

More goodness.

More prioritizing relationships.

And a God who isn't afraid to get hands dirty in the work of building and fashioning something new.

Not surprisingly, the story starts to get a bit messy from here on out...

And yet, through the ups and downs of life, God remains present with a love for us... no matter what.

I encourage you to read ahead in your Bible and jot down things that stand out to you in the text. Maybe even questions or thoughts or insights.

Like you, I'm also watching the COVID numbers and encouraging everyone to make wise choices that work for your family and prioritize safety. The latest recommendations today suggest that the safest way to protect yourself from the Omicron variant is with an N95 mask. We will have a few extras on hand on Sunday morning should

you need one for worship. Online worship will continue to be available for all. **And please, stay home and watch online if you're not feeling well.** (Our COVID-19 protocols are here: <https://hilliardumc.org/reopening-well/>.)

During times like this, I am especially grateful for a chance to remember that God is still here, present, loving, and trustworthy.

I'm really looking forward to this year together.

Grateful for each and every one of you,

Pastor April



Pastor April Blaine
Lead Pastor
ablaine@hilliardumc.org
614.876.2403 (church office)

