

Letters of ENCOURAGEMENT

God Loves You



No Matter What

November 9, 2022

A Note from Pastor April

Dear Friends,

I remember the moment like it was yesterday.

I was 10 years old, and my family and I were on our way out of First United Methodist Church for the day.

Rev. Brooks, the retired minister who attended our church, stopped me in the hallway.

“Mark my word, April... I think one day you are going to be a minister.”



I don't remember exactly what I said to him in that moment, but inside... I was horrified.

A minister?

Why in the world would I want to voluntarily spend MORE time at church?

There were a few aspects of church that I enjoyed — the friends I had made, the donuts and occasional potlucks, and (let's be honest) the Bible drills, which fed my competitive drive.

Some of the stories weren't half bad, but overall, I found church to be BORING. I didn't understand why my parents insisted that we go every single Sunday. I couldn't believe I had fooled Rev. Brooks into thinking I actually wanted to be there!

It's funny how life comes full circle sometimes.

By the time I found my way back to church as a young adult, I had learned a few things. I needed God in my life. I also needed a group of people to walk with on this journey, which was far too complicated by myself.

Still, I didn't know how I felt about the church. Even when I joined the staff of a United Methodist church here in central Ohio as their youth pastor, I had questions. What is our purpose here?

I could see that the church did all kinds of good things. We raised money to build houses for Habitat for Humanity. We housed a community preschool. We provided a place for meaningful community. We hosted VBS, Bible studies, weekly worship, and even mission trips.

People were learning about God and growing in their faith.

It took me a while, and five long years at seminary, to begin understanding my deeper questions, hopes, and dreams about the church and who we had always been called to be.



The essence of church was never about our buildings, programs, or even our worship services. These are simply tools, resources, and tangible opportunities to form, nurture, and remember who we are in God, and to connect us to a community of people who are committed to doing this ongoing work together.

The people of God.
The body of Christ.
Love alive in the world.
Beloved community.

Here at Hilliard UMC, we want to be a place where people can know, experience, and embody the love of God... no matter what.

The work we are doing together isn't easy. It requires hard and honest conversations about who we are and how we are being called to live out that love in the world. We don't always see things in the same way.

Sometimes we need to come together and listen anew to the Spirit and to where we need to trust God in the days to come.

This Sunday, we will do just that.

During worship at 9 and 11am, we will host the Rev. Steve Putka from Amlin United Methodist Church just up the road. We'll be in dialogue about the nature of church in this moment and what our role is in becoming the sign of God's love in the world right now. We'll even be baptizing one of our Faith Finders at the 11am service. (You can worship online here, too: <https://hilliardumc.org/livestream/>.)

Then, at 1pm, we will gather in the Sanctuary again for our **State of the Church Town Hall Meeting** (<https://hilliardumc.org/events/town-hall-meeting/>).

During this time:

- We'll celebrate some of the new ways that God is at work in our community of faith.
- We'll share some of the challenges our denomination is facing as some congregations (not Hilliard UMC) are choosing to disaffiliate from the UMC and how this will impact our church and others. Pastor Jon and I filmed a short video explaining what's going on, which you can watch at this link: <https://vimeo.com/768229780>.
- We'll share updates on the Warehouse 839 building and where we are with our plans to reopen worship and utilize the space.
- We'll have some open and frank conversations about our financial situation and the decisions we will need to be making in the coming year.



EVERYONE is invited and encouraged to attend.

Whether you've been a part of the Hilliard UMC congregation for decades or days, whether you are a member or just started attending, **this is a meeting for everyone who cares about the church, and specifically who cares about this local church and who we are becoming in the days to come.**

The State of the Church Town Hall meeting at 1pm this Sunday will be held in the Sanctuary. **If you wish to attend online, please register here** (<https://hilliardumc.org/events/town-hall-meeting/>) and we'll send you the Zoom link and details.



Even on the most challenging days, I wouldn't want to be anywhere but here — in this community, with this group of people, trying to become the church that the world needs.

Hope to see you Sunday!

Pastor April



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