



January 4, 2023

A Note from Pastor April

**Dear Friends,**

Happy New Year, friends!

I've always loved the ritual of turning the calendar into a new year. The energy that January brings with it offers a fresh start, and a chance to look ahead with renewed hope about what this year might hold.

For many years now, I've been in the habit of taking some time to reflect on the prior year and thinking ahead into the new one. This year, my friend sent me this [helpful document](https://booklet.yearcompass.com/en-US-YearCompass-booklet-US-letter-printable.pdf) that had a series of questions and thoughtful reflection prompts that aided this process. I share it with you in case you might also find it useful.

(<https://booklet.yearcompass.com/en-US-YearCompass-booklet-US-letter-printable.pdf>)

**I've gotten away from New Year's resolutions and instead have been choosing a word for the year that embodies the work that I feel God is inviting me into.**

**2022's word was MOVE.** At one level, I wanted to focus on moving my body on a regular basis, move forward on some proactive health care decisions, and move the clothing out of my closet that no longer fit or felt good on my body.

At a deeper level, I knew I needed to move toward some hard conversations in my personal life and at work that I had been avoiding... and begin more intentional work of moving forward with the help of others on shaping a path ahead.

Looking back through the year, I celebrate some of the progress I made in these areas... including the completion of my first 5K in years and a massively-cleaned-out closet!



**Along the way, one of the big themes that seemed to keep emerging was the balance between claiming the strength within me AND accepting my own (and others') vulnerability.**

In the midst of a particularly challenging moment this year, the person I was sitting with said these words to me:

*"There is no roadmap from here, April. The best we can do is consider what we know and understand and make the best decisions possible in moving ahead. We'll probably get it wrong at times, but we will learn and adjust as we are moving."*

Amid a year of trying to move forward, I can't tell you how helpful it was to hear these words. For me, the fear of failure has, at times, kept me from moving ahead at all.

I'm extra hard on myself when I make decisions that don't turn out the way I had hoped, thinking "I should have done this or that." When I made the choice, however, I didn't know how things would go. Most of the time, I wasn't considering the ways my actions might cause harm.

Every time we are seeking to move forward in a new way, we do so with a lot of uncertainty. We may need to change course. We may learn that we were going the wrong way. There will likely be moments when we need to apologize and forgive. This isn't about failure; it's about learning and growing.

**I suppose it isn't that surprising that it was during the most vulnerable moments this year that I really found my strength.** When I had to face someone I had hurt or when I

had to admit that I had no idea where to go (or when I had to ask for tons of help during a week with COVID)...

These were the times when I realized that, by God's grace, we can keep showing up to one another and to the important work of growing and learning and building something new — together. That's when the real movement starts to happen!

2023 will be a year of more growth and more learning. **My word for this year is LISTEN.** I want to spend more time slowing things down... listening to God, listening to others, and listening to myself.



I'm grateful to be in a community filled with people who want to do this work of growing and learning. We'll be doing that as we lean into Year Two of The Great Story, reading through the Gospel of Matthew and the story of Jesus.

We have several opportunities for you to grow and learn this winter, some online, some in person:

- Stephanie Harrell is facilitating a 6-week class on Zoom called **Can We Talk? Questions About Faith**. Come discuss what you believe about God, ask your questions about faith, and learn with others. Starts this coming Monday, January 9. (<https://hilliardumc.org/grow/adults/learning-opportunities/>)
- Our Enneagram team is offering **Introduction to the Enneagram** again, 4 Tuesday evenings on Zoom starting January 17. And the monthly **Enneagram Integration Group**, for those who know their number already, meets the first Thursday of the month in person in the social hall, 6:30-8pm (tomorrow evening!). That's a come-

when-you-can group, and each month stands alone, so join anytime.  
(<https://hilliardumc.org/enneagram/>)

- On Saturday, January 28, we're bringing in Lisa Hess to lead a **Prayer Beads Workshop**. She's married to Rev. Brian Maguire, Pastor of Fairmont Presbyterian Church, with whom we've been on The Great Story journey this year! Signup deadline is January 14; cost of supplies is \$20 per person (for those able). (<https://hilliardumc.org/grow/adults/learning-opportunities/>)
- On Sunday mornings starting February 5, Marilyn Hoeflinger is going to lead a class on **United Methodist Questions and Answers**, for those who want to learn more about our denomination, what we believe and teach, and how we live. It'll be in person at church, 10am-11am. (<https://hilliardumc.org/grow/adults/learning-opportunities/>)
- There's also a monthly **men's group**, a monthly **women's group**, a new **LGBTQIA+ affinity group**, and a twice-monthly **Lectio Divina Bible reading group** for reading scripture slowly and prayerfully, among others.

One thing is for certain. **None of this growth happens in isolation. I look forward to finding our strength within the vulnerable places of growing.**

Here's to 2023!

Pastor April



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