

Letters of ENCOURAGEMENT

God Loves You  No Matter What

July 19, 2023

A Note from Pastor Jon

Dear Friends,

Every little thing's gonna be alright...

As I write this Letter of Encouragement, it's been just a little over 72 hours since Pastor April has headed off for her 16 weeks of renewal leave from Hilliard UMC. (<https://hilliardumc.org/people/rev-april-blaine/>)

As the days drew closer to her departure, I could feel the tension building in my body as I was acknowledging to myself that I was about to take the reigns for this 16-week period as Interim Lead Pastor.

There was tightness in my back and shoulders. I had that feeling of a deep pit in my stomach. Even though I was physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted from LONG days with Vacation Bible School and VBS Plus, I found myself struggling to have a restful night's sleep.

Then it happened...

I was mowing grass at the parsonage on Thursday evening and listening to music on my streaming app on my phone, and I heard a familiar Reggae beat and the soothing voice of the late Bob Marley...

*"Don't worry about a thing,
cause every little thing, gonna be all right.
This is my message to you."*

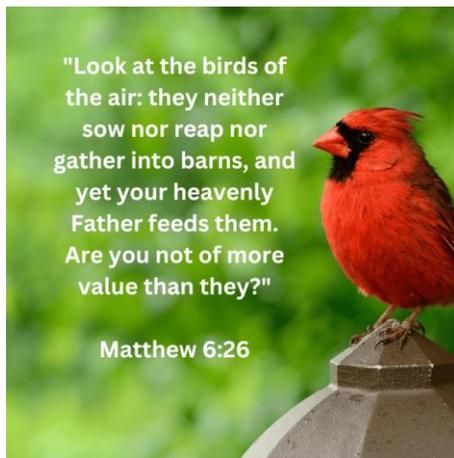
Amid the heat and sweat pouring down my brow, I felt the tears begin to well up in my eyes. I could only begin to think of so many in our HUMC community who have been



checking in with me and have offered themselves to be of assistance in these coming weeks. So many of you have done so that at times I find myself overwhelmed with the realization of so many who care so deeply for our sacred and blessed community.

I'm encouraged and filled with anticipation of these coming days as ministry continues and as we continue to welcome new families and individuals to the HUMC community.

I'm also reminded of some of the other lyrics of the song as it continues. Marley sings of the three little birds who show up on the doorstep and offer their sweet songs, reminding that "every little thing gonna be all right."



Could those three birds be a reminder of Jesus's words in the Sermon on the Mount? In Matthew 6:26, Jesus asks his listeners to think about the birds and how they live day to day dependent upon God for their needs. God provides for them, so how much more will God provide for those God calls God's children.

It's not that we just hit the breaks and wait for Pastor April to return from renewal leave and just expect that God is going to give us everything we need. Certainly, the birds don't just sit in their nest all day.

We continue to go about the work God has called us to do, and as we do we look and we listen for God at work and to where God is calling each of us.

I know that this sounds much easier said than done.

Pastor April also knows me well after these four years of working closely together. So, in her wisdom, her parting words to me were this: **"You have everything you need within you. Trust your voice."**

So, friends, in this Letter of Encouragement on week number 1 of 16 that our beloved Pastor April is spending in a time of renewal, I echo those words.

We have everything we need to carry out the mission God has given to us. To share the love of God for all persons, so that they too may experience that love, embrace that love, and live in that love of God.

We have much work to do in these weeks to come.

We continue the work of being ready to fully launch weekly worship in Warehouse 839.



We continue the work of preparing to build and launch our missional nonprofit.

We continue to feed those who are hungry.

We continue to visit those who are sick.

We continue to seek justice for all persons.

We continue to create and foster spaces for an inclusive community.

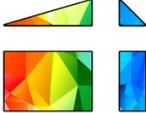
We continue to work to be the people and the church that God is calling us to become.

Friends, I am so grateful to be serving alongside each of you, and I hope you too know that everything's gonna be all right, we have everything that we need, and we can trust our voice because that voice is an echo of the amazing love of our God.

Jon



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