

Letters of ENCOURAGEMENT

God Loves You



No Matter What

October 18, 2023

A Note from Courtney Wiater

Dear Friends,

I have always liked to stay busy. Not always productive, but always busy. All throughout my high school and college career, I was at the school 12 or more hours daily, participating in classes, band, choir, theater, and other extracurriculars.

In my social life, I would go from one activity to the next, rarely pausing or just staying home to rest.

As I entered my first few years as a teacher, the pattern continued. I devoted myself to many extra hours at the school, preparing materials for my class and joining many committees within the school building. I was always busy.

Then came 2020. When the world shut down, I was forced to stay home. Forced to cancel plans. Forced to just be.

As someone who always kept my calendar full, this was initially a huge struggle for me.

I found ways to still keep myself busy — preparing and doing video lessons for my first grade students, scheduling Zoom calls with my coworkers and friends, organizing and cleaning every square inch of my house.

A few months into the pandemic, and as the school year ended, I had run out of activities to fill my schedule. **I was forced to just be.**

As 2020 continued, I reflected on my need to always be busy, on the negative impact it may be having on my emotional and mental wellbeing. **Scripture has so much to say about rest, and the importance of taking time to rest.** I made an intentional decision to



schedule more free time, more time to just be. I reached out to coworkers for support in serving on committees. I learned how to say no to plans with friends.

It certainly doesn't come naturally to me, and rest is something I am continuing to strive for daily.

When my husband and I first came to Hilliard UMC in the summer of 2022, I knew that I wanted to be very intentional to take some time and learn more about the church before volunteering. I wanted to be very intentional in my commitment to volunteer in any capacity.

I wanted to be sure that the space where I volunteered was a good fit, and not just something to fill my calendar and keep me busy.



When Pastor Jon approached me about assisting the Children's Ministry with Godly Play, I was cautiously optimistic about the opportunity to find a ministry that would be a good fit for me. I am an educator at heart, and I love working with children.

As I was trained in Godly Play and began to see it in practice, I was impressed by how the Montessori method used in Godly Play allows children to ask questions, wonder about the Bible passages, and explore using child-accessible materials to connect these stories to the world around them.

I love the questions children ask, and I love to encourage them to always be curious. I love seeing the world and scripture through the eyes of a child.

The process of volunteering for Godly Play was unlike many other volunteering opportunities. When my husband and I observed the process of Godly Play, Lindsay, Nikki, and the rest of the team were so welcoming and eager to answer any of our questions. We observed several times, learning the adult roles meant to guide the flow of the classroom. After several observations, and many more questions answered, my husband and I began to lead Godly Play about once a month.

It stood out to me that the Children's Ministry was very intentional about introducing myself and my husband to the classroom. At no point during training, learning, and observing did I feel pressure to enlist until I was comfortable.

Volunteering with Godly Play feels like an area where I can use my gifts to serve, and not just another thing to keep me busy. I have enjoyed seeing scripture in a new way and reflecting with the children about what scripture teaches



us. As the children wonder about the stories they hear, I find myself in wonder along with them.

I'd like to invite you to consider observing a Godly Play session some Sunday morning. Maybe you'll feel led to volunteer in this ministry (though there's no pressure to do so). Reach out to our church staff, Lindsay Robinson or Nikki Buskirk, to sign up for a time.

Maybe it will engage your sense of wonder along with the children.

Maybe it will help you slow down and just be.

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