

Letters of ENCOURAGEMENT

God Loves You



No Matter What

November 8, 2023

A Note from Pastor Jon

Dear Friends,

It is with a tad bit of excitement that I'm typing these words to offer you this week. A quick glance at the calendar says it's officially November. My calendar says that on the 13th of November, Pastor April resumes duties as Lead Pastor at Hilliard United Methodist Church. As you all know I look forward with great anticipation to her return and to no longer carrying the yoke of pastoral leadership of this great congregation alone.

Back in July, in my first Letter of Encouragement to you following Pastor April's departure for renewal, I shared with you a breath of inspiration from that great theologian Bob Marley. (<https://hilliardumc.org/letters-of-encouragement/>) As I was feeling the weight of anxiety of taking the reigns of leadership in her absence, I heard this timely message:

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



I now read these words, in retrospect, with a sense of deep gratitude and thankfulness and a bit of wondering: how did I (we) survive these last four months?

I said in July it was not my vision or intention to tap the breaks and let it ride until Pastor April returned. I told our staff and leadership teams we were not going to ask, "What would Pastor April want us to do?"

My desire was to keep listening to God and to be willing to go to the places God was leading and calling.

Little did I know we would have a sudden staff resignation and the need to make a quick hire of a new Finance Administrator. But in that moment, God said I have the person in your midst, and indeed Jenn Halsaver has been a welcome addition to our staff team. I offer a huge thank you to Sheri Meier for staying on to provide many extra hours of training. (<https://hilliardumc.org/people/finance-admin/>)

God also provided us with Tony Hagood and Jeff Rone to fill out our music staff and to continue to provide spirit-filled music across all three worship services. (<https://hilliardumc.org/people/tony-hagood/> ; <https://hilliardumc.org/people/jeff-rone/>)



Speaking of three worship services, God led us to make some major changes to our Warehouse 839 worship space.

God also provided us with an electrician, some technical minds, and many hands to reset the space on time and ready to relaunch weekly worship in our nontraditional space at 11:15am.

Not to mention that just about a month ago we heard from our friends at the Hilliard Food Pantry. (<https://www.hilliardfoodpantry.org/>) The director shared that their temporary site, after the fire, was not going to be sustainable into the winter months for the needs of those they serve. God led us to enter into conversation about utilizing the old studio space in the Warehouse 839 building, which happened to have just what was needed in the interim.

Within a week we had an agreement in place to provide a temporary home for the Pantry. In just one week the staff, countless volunteers, and nearly 400 families entered a small portion of the space God has given to us and experienced God's love.

And just this past Sunday we welcomed seven new members to the HUMC family!

All the while, each of YOU has continued to give, to serve, to love, and to live in the love of God.

This is just a glimpse back at the last 16 weeks.

I count myself blessed to have learned the lessons of the little birds singing this message of Mr. Marley, remembering that the birds don't just sit in the nest. The birds attend to things of importance, and God sees that the birds are cared for.



Friends, we attended to the things of importance. We provided food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, visited the sick, sought justice for all persons, and continued our work to foster inclusive spaces to all persons to experience God's love.

These weeks have not been without challenge, but I would not have wanted to face these challenges with any others by my side or without God leading us in each step.

Thank you for encouraging me to trust myself, to trust my voice, to trust my leadership.

Now may we continue to listen, to trust, and to be the hands, the feet, and the echo of God's amazing love for our community and to every place God leads.

Peace,

Pastor Jon



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