



January 24, 2024
A Note from Pastor April

Dear Friends,

Anyone else having trouble keeping all the things together?

Tuesday morning began with a panicked phone call from a parishioner.

I was scheduled to meet with her husband at a local coffee shop, and she was calling to say, "He's on his way. He totally forgot and is so embarrassed!"

When he arrived, he apologized profusely and then we had a good laugh as I told him...

"I am NEVER late to meetings. I ALWAYS have full control over my calendar."
(In case you can't catch the tone of these sentences — I am making a joke.)

When I finally arrived back in the office just in time for my 11am meeting, one of our staff was sitting there waiting.

"Did you forget about our meeting?"

(We had been scheduled for 10am.)

She (and the team I was meeting with at 11am) offered a huge amount of grace to me as I quickly met with her then jumped on the 11am call more than 20 minutes late.

Later that afternoon, around 1:15pm, my phone buzzes.

This time, it was my spiritual director.

"Did you forget about our meeting?"

(We had been scheduled for 1pm.)

Like most of you, I never intend to be late or scattered. I value people immensely. If I promise to do something or be somewhere, I intend to honor that commitment. (My coffee mug of choice at the coffee shop that morning speaks to my ambitious desires!)

But sometimes, well... life happens. (And sometimes... it even happens twice in one day!)

I appreciated Pastor Jon's sermon from January 14th and his reminder that making mistakes is and has always been a part of the story of being human.

Perhaps where we need improvement is acknowledging our mistakes with compassion and then moving forward. Shame, beating ourselves up, or feeling like a failure is usually much less helpful.

Grace abounds.

I was also reminded how much of the church's story is learning to trust that somehow, God is at work in, through, and despite of our blunders and mistakes.

On one of the first Sundays after returning from Renewal Leave, I was leading worship in our new Warehouse 839 service at 11:15. We keep the lights pretty dim in this service, so it's difficult to see peoples' faces.

As I was preaching, I noticed the outline of two faces that I recognized. I was surprised to see them there, since I thought I had already seen them earlier at the 9am service.

Hmmm... I thought. Maybe they are just checking out the Warehouse 839 service.

When it came time for communion, I looked the gentleman right in the eye and said,

"Charles, this is the body of Christ broken for you."

On the way out, as Pastor Jon and I were saying hello at the door, this same man came up to Jon and said,

"Nice to meet you, I'm Steve."

Steve?

I had one of those embarrassing moments of realizing that I'd just called someone the wrong name while serving them the Sacrament of Holy Communion.



This was immediately followed by another realization.

I know Steve!

Steve and his wife Marcie had been members of the very first church I had served in Columbus, where their youngest daughter was in my youth group.

It was Steve and Marcie's first time visiting our church. They were looking for a new home.

(Under dim lights, Steve and Marcie also look a lot like Charles and Kathy, long time members of our church.)

I told them the story and we all had a good laugh.



Over the next few Sundays, they came to the Sanctuary services. Pretty soon, I was able to introduce them to their doppelgangers.

Since then, Steve has joined the choir, sitting just a couple of seats down from Charles. After worship a couple of weeks ago, Marcie sent me this picture of the four of them, who are becoming fast friends.

I appreciated the reminder that the Spirit isn't ever deterred by our humanity and that we don't always need to get it right all the time. And sometimes our blunders can even bring people together!

Grace abounds.

When I finally got on the call with my Spiritual Director on Tuesday (after we also shared a good laugh), she shared with me this beautiful poem that I'll close with.

Perhaps it will help serve as a reminder to you of the grace that abounds, especially on the days when you're having a hard time keeping all the things straight.

The Avowal

by Denise Levertov (1923–1997)

As swimmers dare
to lie face to the sky

and water bears them,
as hawks rest upon air
and air sustains them,
so would I learn to attain
free fall, and float
into Creator Spirit's deep embrace,
knowing no effort earns
that all-surrounding grace.

May you feel this boundless grace this day and every day.

(And if I ever miss a meeting, phone call, or email, please tell me so we can make it right and hopefully laugh about it!) ☺

Pastor April



The Rev. April Blaine
Lead Pastor
ablaine@hilliardumc.org
614.876.2403 (church office)
<https://hilliardumc.org/people/rev-april-blaine/>

