



March 13, 2024
A Note from Pastor Jon

Dear Friends,

Can I be honest with you for a few minutes? I mean it... really honest...

One of our core values at HUMC is that Authentic Relationships Matter. Being honest and vulnerable help to build those relationships. Honesty and vulnerability are ways of building trust. Having an authentic relationship means that I can tell you what I'm genuinely thinking and feeling, not seeking sympathy and trusting not to be taken advantage of, but to share more about who I am and my growing understanding of *whose* I am.

By now many of you know that **I was raised in the church**. I can't remember a time when church was not a integral part of my life.

Those early years I was in very conservative theological spaces — some might call them evangelical, but more appropriate would be *fundamentalist*. To sum it up in one sentence: there are fundamentals to stick to and follow and all will be well. That is an oversimplification, but there's not enough space in this Letter of Encouragement to delve too deep.



One message I remember that was overly emphasized in my childhood faith experience was that I was nothing more than a fallen, unworthy sinner in need of repentance so I could be saved from eternal damnation and the fires of hell.

Mind you, before I could think logically and formulate any clarifying questions or understand the implications, I was convinced that I was indeed nothing more than a fallen, unworthy sinner in need of repentance so I could be saved from eternal damnation and the fires of hell.

I had no idea why or what I had done, I had just been convinced that if I thought the flames of a *fireplace* were hot, I was destined for worse for all time. I had also been convinced that I simply needed to be saved from the fiery flames of a place called hell, and that the church (the one where I was hearing this message) was the only one that could keep me on the “straight and narrow.”

Fast forward forty-plus years, and I am so grateful that the church is still an integral part of my life — so integral in fact that it is within the church that I have made my living for these last twenty years.



I am also oh-so grateful that my own journey has brought me to this place and season in life to be amongst each of you, particularly in this 2024 Lenten season.

This season of close examination of **Romans 8** has been, thus far, one that has given space for me to continue my spiritual journey of growth and understanding who I really am. Yes, even

as a professional pastor, my spiritual journey of growth and understanding continues.

Even to this day I am embracing that I am NOT a fallen, unworthy sinner in need of repentance so I can be saved FROM eternal damnation and the fires of hell.

Oh NO! That's not me.

I am an adopted heir of my creator. My creator adopted me and has saved me FOR partnering with my creator to be a source of light and love, doing my part to restore creation here on earth, now, and every moment I draw breath.

As I carry the title of clergy or pastor, I understand that it is much easier to frighten people to than to inspire people. We respond a lot faster when we are afraid or uncomfortable.

Yet Paul cautions us to not fall back into fear, where our default is reactionary rather than being open and receptive, acting in and through the spirit of God, which is love.

While I do not like to believe that the clergy and church of my childhood had a nefarious rationale, I do believe their rationale was misplaced. **The God who chose to adopt me chose to do so for a much higher purpose and calling than for eternal fire insurance.**



My prayer for you these last three weeks of Lent is that you too are beginning to embrace or more deeply embrace and remind yourself that you are an adopted heir in the family of God.

God chose you to be the embodiment of God's light and love, the spirit of God, and God's partner in creating the kin-dom here and now.

If you're saying today, "I'm not there yet," that is okay.

If you're saying today, "Pastor Jon, I embraced that a long time ago," that is okay.

If you're saying today, "I'm somewhere in the middle," that is okay as well.

If you were raised in these conservative/evangelical/fundamentalist spaces and want to chat more about what it means to be saved, I encourage you to come to the **Understanding Good Friday class** next Sunday, March 24, 1:30-3pm in the social hall, with Pastor April and Beth Palmer. (<https://hilliardumc.org/grow/adults/learning-opportunities/#good-Friday>)

We are all on a journey. Some days I find it easier to accept my spirit of adoption than others. Thanks be to God, this is one of the good days.

Wherever we find ourselves today, just starting out or a long way down the road, may we never think or act as if our journey is complete. May we continue to draw on the power of the Spirit of God that is within each of us to do our part, so that together we can be the people and the church God is calling us to become.

Pastor Jon



The Rev. Jon Osmundson
Associate Pastor
josmundson@hilliardumc.org
614.876.2403 (church office)
<https://hilliardumc.org/people/jon-osmundson/>

 **Hilliard**
United Methodist Church
God Loves You  No Matter What
5445 Scioto Darby Road
Hilliard, Ohio 43026 | 614.876.2403
info@hilliardumc.org
www.hilliardumc.org