



May 15, 2024  
A Note from Pastor April

**Dear Friends,**

Spending time with family has always been really precious to me.

When Martin and I made the move to Ohio in 2003, we left behind our families in Arkansas. Since then, my immediate family has only become more scattered across the US (my sister in Seattle and my brother and his wife in Colorado). Though we make lots of efforts to stay connected and see each other throughout the year, I always wish we could spend more time together.



So, when the text came in from my sister-in-law to join her for a quick trip to Seattle to see her all-time favorite musician, Justin Timberlake... I didn't hesitate for long.



It was a whirlwind trip that only allowed for 36 hours on the ground in Seattle. We got dressed up, did each other's hair, had some wonderful food and drinks before the show, and did an awful lot of dancing throughout the entire evening. Justin and the Tennessee Kids brought their "A game" in every way. The choreography, brass band, lights, and even stunts were thoroughly impressive.

It was such precious time with my sisters. Connecting and experiencing something together was a beautiful way of growing closer together and strengthening the bonds of family and love.

As I listened to my sisters share what meant the most to them, one theme kept coming up:

**“We loved being in a stadium full of people all gathered for the same purpose and sharing in this collective experience.”**

I knew exactly what they meant, and I had certainly felt this energy myself.

At the same time, it was clear that this felt like an extraordinary experience to them, something that was rare and uncommon.

I could tell how meaningful this was for them, how healing it was to connect with other strangers in this way and to feel a part of something larger than themselves.



**And I knew why I wasn't sharing in their same sense of awe and revelry...**

**..because I have that experience at Hilliard UMC with our congregation nearly every Sunday in worship, and often in small group gatherings.**

No, there aren't 10,000 people, or a multi-million dollar lightshow and production.

But there are people I know and love, singing together, praying together, breaking bread together, and connecting with God and self together.

**And something very powerful happens over time when you immerse yourself in community in this way.**

Healing, connection, growth, and COMMUNITY.



**This Sunday, we will gather together as ONE CHURCH, outside in the parking lot for our annual Celebration Sunday with ONE SERVICE at 10:30am.**

(<https://hilliardumc.org/events/celebration-sunday-2024/>)

We will enjoy some beautiful music, sing together, pray together, celebrate the joys that have happened in the lives of our precious kiddos, and afterward gather around a table to break bread together and share in a picnic.

There won't be any strobe lights or celebrities present, but there will be something beautiful...

A day to celebrate together the birthday of the church, which happened on Pentecost Sunday... A day to hear the story with new ears, and a day to listen for the ways the Holy Spirit is at work in the church in new ways in this season.

I hope you will join us in person for this special time together. (The service will also livestream as usual.) <https://hilliardumc.org/celebration-sunday-livestream/>

If you haven't yet signed up to come to the picnic and bring a side dish or dessert to share (if you like) — there's no time like the present! And there are still some opportunities to serve for the worship service setup and parking teams.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080B4CA5AD2FA3F58-49372920-celebration>

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C084FACA62BA5FC1-celebration#/>

See you Sunday!

April



The Rev. April Blaine

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