



January 22, 2025

A Note from Michael Haney

**Dear Friends,**

Matthew 18:20 — “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

Way back in 1988, Lisa and I were looking for a church. We were engaged, and as neither of us was regularly attending church at the time, we were looking for a church in which to get married and then attend.

One Sunday we visited Plainfield (IN) United Methodist Church. We were greeted warmly and attended one of the morning services. After the service we were approached by a couple who invited us to their adult Sunday School class immediately afterward. They were the “Genesis” class and were a group of couples about our age, some with kids, some not. We joined them that Sunday and never left until we moved to Ohio eight years later.

Those people became our lifelong friends — we attended church together, raised our kids together, camped together, and served together.

**That small group changed our lives.**

Jon did an amazing job last Sunday explaining why we should all be part of a small group and learning as part of a community. If you didn’t hear his message on Sunday, I highly encourage you to go listen to it now (scroll down on this page - <https://hilliardumc.org/livestream/> - to the Library of Previous Services and listen to January 19). It explains the “why” better than I ever could.

Instead, I would like to focus on types of small groups and opportunities at HUMC. Small groups can take many forms. They can differ in length, commitment, and purpose.





Currently I am part of a small group studying prayer that meets each Wednesday for six weeks (all welcome to come to Prayer & Meditation Boot Camp - <https://hilliardumc.org/grow/adults/learning-opportunities/#boot-camp>). I also attend the Men's group that meets on the third Monday of each month ( <https://hilliardumc.org/grow/adults/ongoing-groups/#men> ). The prayer group is an example of a small group focused on study and is for a limited time. The men's group is focused on community and support and hopefully will never end!

Other small groups spring from faith experiences that last a short time, but then continue in the form of a small group. For example, Emmaus is a weekend spiritual retreat that lasts just 72 hours ( <https://hilliardumc.org/grow/adults/learning-opportunities/#emmaus> ). But often, and very intentionally, from those weekends the participants form small groups so they can continue the learning and fellowship that began on the weekend.

Deeper Waters follows a similar pattern. It is a 10-month spiritual and personal growth experience that has many components including small groups. Those small groups can (and do!) last well beyond the 10-month cohort. ( <https://hilliardumc.org/grow/adults/learning-opportunities/#deeperwaters> )

At HUMC there are many opportunities of all kinds to be part of a small group. Looking at the website ( <https://hilliardumc.org/> ) I see many possibilities including the Sacred Earth Group, serving at the Food Pantry, AA, Intro to the Enneagram, Midday Bible Discussion, etc. There are small groups for learning, serving, or just socializing! Some last a limited time, and some are ongoing. Some have a level of commitment, and others you can just drop in when it works for you.

### **We're forming some new small groups now around our two-year Sunday message series, *The Whole Story*.**

We are encouraging everyone to be part of a small group so that we can all learn from each other as we examine God's word and its implication for our lives.

So often in small groups I have learned from the other members as I listen to what *they* hear in a passage or verse. Even if it is a passage I have read many times, seeing it through some else's "lens" can reveal meaning that I would have never found on my own. Individual study can be wonderful, but God intended us to live in community. I hope that you take advantage of this upcoming opportunity as we learn together about *The Whole Story*. **(One Whole Story Group is ready to go: starts Sunday, February 2, 10-11am, Sanctuary building, room 306/308, facilitated by Marilyn Hoeflinger & Gabi Poliseno. More to come!)**



The members of that Genesis class look very different now. Most of us are grandparents, and we have scattered geographically. But the impact of the years we spent as small group studying together, serving together and sharing our lives will never fade. God thrives in community. I invite you to experience that for yourself.

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