

# Letters of ENCOURAGEMENT

God Loves You



No Matter What

April 16, 2025

A Note from Beth Palmer

**Hello Friends,**

I walked my first prayer labyrinth probably 25 years ago, and it was a powerful God experience that has stayed with me.

It was an outdoor labyrinth, surrounded by beautiful landscaping, sometime in the fall just as the weather was starting to cool. A lovely evening.

I started with a couple of deeper, centering breaths (my friend Vicki had given me some guidance).



Then I began walking slowly and mindfully along the path toward the center, trying to intentionally let go of my thoughts and worries.

At some point **I noticed my mind begin to quiet and my body begin to relax.**



That alone was amazing!! My mind is rarely quiet, my body *almost never* really relaxed.

**Then something happened.**

God spoke to my heart in a sort of vision or something. It probably happened as I lingered a bit in the middle of the labyrinth, listening for God's word to me, but I don't remember exactly.

I got this image in my mind of floating on my back on a calm lake (the lake at my beloved Camp Akita in the Hocking Hills, actually, pictured here). My eyes were

closed, the sun warm on my face. I love to swim, and I felt so safe. Not a care.

Then the scene panned out, I got smaller in my mind's eye, and my view expanded to include the whole lake and surrounding woods.

**And I got the sense that I was actually floating in God's hands.**

I was held in God's heart, and a feeling of being completely — *completely* — loved came over me.

Held in the arms of a God who loves me... no matter what.

You are, too.

I don't remember actually hearing these words, but it seemed that God was saying to me, "You are my beloved, in whom I am well pleased" (from Luke 3:22).



My body relaxed even more (again, so rare, must make note). My heart rate slowed down. My thoughts stilled. My heart opened wide to this amazing love. A beautiful feeling of serenity rose up within my bones.

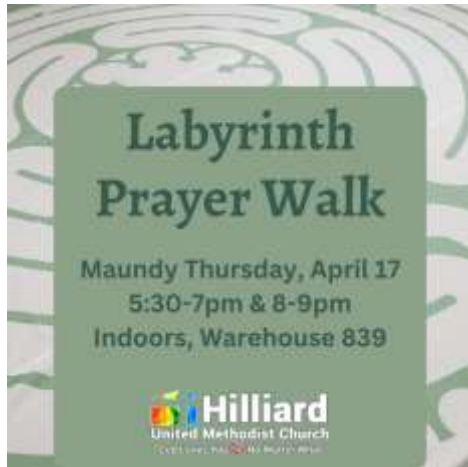
**With this image came the solid assurance that there's nothing I have to do for God to love me any *more*, and there's nothing I could do that would make God love me any *less*.**

As I walked the path back out, I gave God thanks for that assurance. For God's loving presence in my life. But mostly I remember being kind of in awe, at a loss for words, so profound was the experience. (Can you picture it, me at a loss for words??!)

I have carried this with me ever since. It has been formative for me in my life, my relationships, my work, my ministry: **We are all held in the arms of a God who loves us no matter what. Full stop.**

For someone who has always (mistakenly) felt like I have to be responsible for *everything*, this experience continues to remind me today that I really can let go and trust God. I can trust that God's got me. God's got whatever I'm stewing about. God's holding me, holding us, holding you, holding our family and friends, holding our nation, holding our world. God's got this. I can let go, unclench my fists, take a breath.

Do my part, still, yes, but also let go, unclench my fists, and take a breath.



**There's something about moving my body — walking — while praying that has always been grounding for me. It helps me slow down and listen and connect with God.**

Thanks to the generosity of a couple of faithful HUMC members, the church owns a beautiful fabric labyrinth that we use indoors. We'll have it set up and available for you in the gym tomorrow, **Maundy Thursday**, from 5:30-7pm and again 8-9pm, before and after the 7pm worship service in Warehouse 839. I can't recommend this simple practice highly enough. [https://hilliardumc.org/events/labyrinth-prayer-](https://hilliardumc.org/events/labyrinth-prayer-walk/)

[walk/](https://hilliardumc.org/events/labyrinth-prayer-walk/)

Maundy Thursday is simply a beautiful time to remember the last meal Jesus had with his best friends. <https://hilliardumc.org/pages/lent-2025/>

**Good Friday** worship (this Friday) is about remembering the journey Jesus took to the cross — we'll worship together at 7pm in the Sanctuary. (Both Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services will have ASL for the deaf and hard of hearing and also livestream.) <https://hilliardumc.org/livestream/>

New this year, we're invited to join our friends at Resurrection Lutheran Church down the street for an **Easter Vigil** service at 7pm on Saturday, remembering the silence and darkness of the time between the death of Jesus and the new life of Easter morning (3500 Main St). <https://www.rel.org/> (This service is in-person only.)

So, my friends: what helps *you* slow down and rest in the welcoming presence of God?

**What helps you remember how much you are loved — really, actually, wholeheartedly loved... just as you are... no matter what?**

I hope you can find some time this week (even 2 minutes) to pause, take a few centering breaths, try to quiet your mind a little bit, and listen for what God might have for you in the stories of Holy Week and Easter.

Beth



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