



September 10, 2025  
A Note from Gaby Polisenio

**Dear Friends,**

I nervously pulled up to the coffee shop where I was meeting April and prayed that God would help me to not use any curse words in this meeting with my pastor. I have a bit of a sailor's mouth at times and really did not want this to come through with April, as we were still getting to know each other and she was, after all, a pastor.

April warmly greeted me and treated me to a delicious Pistachio Latte (if you go to Qamaria, you know how good their pistachio sauce is), then we sat down for what I anticipated to be an uncomfortable conversation. I was fearful that April would hear my concerns as criticisms, rather than ways that I wanted to help grow as a part of HUMC.

I had asked April to talk with me because my husband and I had been going to HUMC for about six months and we were struggling to find community at the church. We both work full time, so the weekday afternoon Bible studies and prayer groups weren't accessible to us, and we were having a hard time meeting people.

April patiently listened to me ramble on about how I felt stuck and in need of community and connection as we settled into this new church. My husband, Clay, and I had recently left our church, where I had been going for nearly a decade, because we wanted to find a church that was LGBTQ+ affirming.

This was a hard transition as we both served in leadership roles in our previous church and had a strong community of friends there. **We were feeling lonely and nervous about making a change and how long it was taking us to meet people.**

April graciously validated this experience and agreed that there was a lack of opportunities for connection for young adults, especially young adults without children. She invited me to



consider a way to get young adults together, even offering to connect me with others who she thought might be feeling the same way.

I felt so grateful that she didn't get defensive of the church, rather she agreed that there was space to build and grow. It feels rare to speak with a pastor who doesn't lead from a place of ego, and **this moment was really healing for my faith.**

I decided (and luckily, Clay was on board) to host a young adult get together so we could meet other folks our age and hopefully connect and forge some community. We filmed a very awkward video invitation where we basically said "please come to our house and be our friends," which was played at church a couple of times to spread the word about our shindig. Thankfully, people showed up and we learned that we were indeed not alone in feeling lonely.



About ten people came that day, and others reached out after. From this, we decided to do monthly coffee dates at Coffee Connections before church (now meeting at Qamaria Coffee Co. — this Sunday!).

(<https://hilliardumc.org/events/young-adult-coffee-meetups/>)

Before I knew it, community was being formed. Awkwardly and a little clumsily, we got to know each other. I was relieved to hear that there were others feeling the same desire to connect and build friendships.

**Through meeting people, I feel more at home at HUMC, and I feel closer with God in new ways, too.**

This new community is a blessing, and God's timing was provisional as a couple months after we started meeting with other young adults at church, we decided to welcome our first foster child — a ten-day-old, 4lb baby boy. **Without the community we found at HUMC, this would have been incredibly challenging.**

Whether it was the food drop-offs during those first few weeks when we were drowning, the way other families helped us with hand-me-downs, or the kind people who checked in on us while we frantically tried to learn how to parent with only a couple of days notice, we were incredibly blessed by the community we found at HUMC.

I am so grateful to go to a church where the lead pastor is willing to share a coffee with a new congregant who is struggling. I am even more grateful that April is the type of person who truly cares about cultivating community and fostering



genuine connections within the church. She didn't uphold norms or expectations, but was willing to get creative and really listen to what I wanted. During that conversation, I felt truly seen and valued, a feeling we all deserve to experience and give to others.

If you are still reading this, thanks for hanging in there! I will end this letter with an invitation. I got to experience community, candor, and true camaraderie because of April's willingness to meet me where I was without centering herself, as well as my willingness to be vulnerable with her.

**Where in your life would vulnerability create openness for greater connection?**

**What issues, situations, or relationships could be benefitted by decentering yourself in the conversation?**

My prayer is that you would be encouraged to take the lead of faith and in return, experience deepened connection in your life, too.

If you are interested in building community with other folks in their 20s-40s, we are still meeting monthly! Join us this Sunday at 10am at Qamaria Yemeni Coffee Co. at 3221 Hilliard Rome Rd, just south of church in Tinapple Plaza (second Sundays, monthly).

Gaby

Gaby Polisenio  
gabriellepolisenio@gmail.com

