



September 24, 2025  
A Note from Jen Coleman

**Dear Friends,**

### **The Land as a Living Witness**

Over the last several months, I've had the privilege of working with a small group of HUMC members exploring the history of our church, the Hilliard community, and central Ohio.

Our purpose was to listen — to hear what the past could teach us about this place and the people who have lived here. I don't think we knew exactly what we would discover, but we quickly found ourselves immersed in layers of human connection and are still uncovering more.

We read about the Indigenous peoples who built mounds throughout Ohio thousands of years ago, their sacred earthworks rising above the confluence of rivers that still flow through our community today.

We walked the ground at a surviving earthwork, taking in the same view of the sky that ancient peoples once contemplated.

We encountered stories of war and broken promises that tore communities apart and discovered how this place once stood as a beacon of hope for African Americans fleeing oppression.

We confronted the reality that, not so long ago, our town's only pool refused entry based on skin color, and we celebrated how some of our neighbors stood up to that injustice.

Through all the ups, downs, twists, and turns of these stories, there has always been one common foundation: the land, a living witness to our journey. Is it too far-fetched to say that this little piece of ground where we live can mean that much?

### **Stories that Shape Us**



I grew up in rural Kentucky in a family steeped in old Appalachian traditions where generations would often build homes on the same soil. (Picture: Stafford family farm, western Kentucky.)

When I was still a child, my grandfather showed me the best place on the farm to build my future home, and my next-door neighbor was my great grandmother (who sparked my love of family history and the written word).

This multigenerational relationship with land can create a profound bond between families and the Earth, where wisdom and stories pass from one generation to the next and the true worth of land cannot be measured in monetary terms.

Whether we live on the same soil for generations or move around, human beings possess an essential need for belonging and sense of place. And in our increasingly disconnected world, understanding our relationship to the land and the history it has witnessed can be a powerful part of our spiritual journey.

Kentucky poet George Ella Lyon has explored this idea in her work. Her famous "Where I'm From" poem has become a popular writing prompt inspiring people to explore their own roots and sense of place. The countless stories written as a result remind us that our individual narratives are part of the larger story that includes everyone who has ever walked this land. (<http://www.georgeellalyon.com/where.html>)



Our faith teaches us that the Earth belongs to its creator, and we are temporary stewards called to manage it in a way that honors God and serves our neighbors.

Being a good steward also requires us to know its full story, both the good and those things harder to accept. Understanding our origins helps us better comprehend our destination. And when we honor the stories of all who came before us, we create space for authentic belonging in our community today.

So yes, this little piece of ground can mean that much. It holds our story, witnesses our journey, and reflects who we are.

### A Call to Reflect

HUMC has partnered with the Great Circle Alliance to bring the **Mounds, Moon, and Stars exhibit** to the church **September 21 through October 26**, and the entire community is invited to view and reflect on the history of ancient earthworks.



An opening reception and panel discussion will take place on **Tuesday, September 30 at 6:30pm**, where you can hear more about our local history and how it connects to the exhibit. I hope you'll be able to join us. (<https://greatcirclealliance.com/>)

And next month, on **Wednesday, October 22**, at 7pm in the Sanctuary, **Dr. Belinda Gore** will be back with us to give a **public talk** on the exhibit, the work of the Great Circle Alliance, and our collective history.

I never built that house my grandfather envisioned, but I still feel deeply connected to that land wherever I go. Story binds me to it.

The poem that follows is my take on Lyon's prompt and captures a small piece of my journey, with the land always in the background serving as my witness. In sharing it, I also invite you to reflect on your own journey, perhaps using Lyon's prompt to start, and explore how you feel connected to this sacred ground we all call home.

## Where I'm From

~Jennifer Coleman

*I am from apple trees.*

*From an upward maze of branches that call me to ignore the fear of falling and climb. So I climb, trying to reach the top in a thunderstorm.*

*I am from a garden.*

*From young and old sitting in a circle of tattered chairs, filling ice cream buckets with blackberries, cans with green beans, and our empty pockets with laughter.*

*I am from a barn.*

*From horses, cows, and newborn kittens keeping me company when no one else was there. In return, I helped them be born, live, and die.*

*I am from sadness.*

*From troubled hearts trying to overcome, pulled inward on themselves and unable to comfort each other, wondering when they would finally be able to smile again.*

*I am from anger.*

*From forced conversations about pain and blame*



*which fall on ears that can't hear and hearts that can't accept  
that what was is not okay.*

*I am from the woods.  
From hidden creeks where I catch tadpoles  
and dream up stories and new worlds, contemplating  
God, the wind, life, and dreams.*

*I am from a kitchen.  
From a sharp-minded grandmother  
Pouring sorghum syrup over biscuits and frying chicken.  
Her life, her stories reminding me that history is worth remembering.*

*I am from strength.  
From beautifully flawed people, neither good nor bad,  
who don't stop trying to be better.*

*Because no matter how twisting and tall the branches grow,  
we keep clawing our way up, through wind and rain,  
to reach the top of those apple trees.*

Jen



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