

Letters of ENCOURAGEMENT

God Loves You



No Matter What

November 13, 2025

A Note from Pastor April

Dear Friends,

This past week as I was driving home with my youngest son, he opened a personality quiz on his phone and started asking me questions. He wanted to know, “Mom, how much do you know about ME?”

While I like to think I know my son better than most, I’m embarrassed to say that I didn’t score very high. I knew his favorite color, favorite food, and ideal vacation destination, but I struggled to identify the things he was most passionate about, or what he was most afraid of. Some of the answers I gave would have been correct a couple of years ago, or even a few months ago, but now things have evolved.



“Try to keep up Mom,” he said.



The quiz opened space for some helpful conversations about one another. It gave me a chance to get to know my son as he is in this moment and listen for the things that keep emerging as the days go by.

As much as I’d like to hold onto that little boy that still fit inside my arms at one point, what I want more than anything is to get to know the real 15-year old young man he is becoming.

In the last Letter of Encouragement, I wrote a bit about how this season has been one of questioning my assumptions and listening for the many things that I had missed. That has been true in so many ways in my work here at the church.

I am eternally grateful for the many leaders in this church who have met with me in one-on-one conversations over the last six weeks to share your hearts, your love for the church, your concerns, and especially your desire for us to make significant changes regarding our finances.

I'm grateful to our lay leaders who have worked diligently to bring the full scope of the financial concerns to everyone's attention.



I am also deeply sorry for the ways that my own lack of urgent actions around these financial issues contributed to the moment we are in. I wish I would have seen earlier in the year what I see now. I take full responsibility for the impact this has had on so many of the relationships of trust we have built over these last nine years.

As a result of the many of you who were willing to stay at the table and have these hard conversations, we have had meaningful discussions about how to move forward *together*. **We are *both* facing the reality we are in *and* working together to listen to the Spirit to lead us toward an outcome that is faithful to our vision and mission and allows us a sustainable future.**

A few things about where we are...

We have sought the guidance and wisdom of our new District Superintendent, the Rev. Jim Wilson, who has been helping your pastors and lay leaders understand what needs to take priority. Jim's guidance was simple: Put together a plan where you are only spending the money you know you will have. Your leadership are all committed to setting a budget for 2026 that reflects this. Jim will be presiding over our annual all-church meeting (called Church Conference) this Sunday at 5:30pm in the Sanctuary.

Our Staff Parish Relations Committee (our version of HR) has met twice in the last two weeks to explore scenarios that would include a reduction to our staffing budget to better align with the reality of our expected income. We will share some of the proposed scenarios at our Church Conference this Sunday (again, November 16, at 5:30pm in the Sanctuary). The former chair of Staff Parish, Will Nixon, resigned last week, and the new Interim Chair is Stephanie Harrell. She is happy to hear your feedback and requests as we proceed forward.



Pastors have been in conversation with staff about how this transition might look different for each position, allowing for transparency and input from each staff person. Those conversations are still in process. As a result of the discussions thus far, most of the suggestions you will see in the scenarios are ones that staff themselves have already agreed would be workable.

Many of you attended one or more of the three focus groups led by our Lay Leaders. Out of those conversations, some of you have decided to increase your giving, and others have already offered your names to serve on one of our leadership teams. If you have interest in serving, you can always fill out our interest form or nominate someone here (<https://hilliardumc.churchcenter.com/people/forms/952202>). Many of you have expressed an interest in knowing more about our finances and staying more engaged.

Our October Monthly Reports show a slightly better trajectory for us. The gap between expenses and income at the end of September was \$113,870.35. The gap between expenses and income at the end of October was \$68,286.06. This included our annual interest check from our Permanent Endowment Fund of \$40,000. Even without this, our income exceeded our expenses by \$5,584.29.

We decided to wait on our annual stewardship letter and campaign for pledges until after we had these potential scenarios worked out. It felt disingenuous to ask for your support for next year without a clear, sustainable plan. You can expect that letter and pledge card to arrive around Thanksgiving, inviting folks to bring in their pledges in late November and early December. Thank you for your patience.

I've learned a lot during these few months, and it has been humbling... and important. What you can count on from your pastors going forward is more regular updates about where we are financially, as well as intentional space for listening and feedback. Pastor Jon and I are working on some ways to add even more places for information to be shared, which could include small group gatherings and other spaces outside of worship.

You matter, friends. Your engagement and feedback matter. We are truly listening and learning and growing — right alongside you.

In this Sunday's message, I'll be focusing on the Authentic Relationships that help us to keep moving forward when the path gets tricky. **The only way forward is together, and I want you to know how grateful I am to be at the table together.**



In Christ,

Pastor April

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