



Oak Hills United Methodist Church

The Oak Notes

July 2022



Address: 6069 Bridgetown Road
Cincinnati, OH 45248
Phone: 513-574-1131

Website: www.oakhillsumc.org
email: oakhillsumc@fuse.net
Fax: 513-574-4500

A Message from Our Pastor

What a joy and privilege it was to worship with you all last weekend at Oak Hills. It is such an honor and privilege to be able to serve as your pastor and I look forward to seeing what God does among us.

As I come to this first newsletter, I thought I would spend some time sharing a little of my story with you, including my testimony and my call into ministry.

I grew up as the oldest child of three in central Indiana. I was a good student. I ran on the cross country and track teams and played the saxophone in the high school band. From a young age, I was interested in questions of theology. I enjoyed going to church, loved confirmation, and listened almost exclusively to Christian music. In spite of all this, I never fully understand what it really meant to be a Christian.

It March of 1998, my senior year in high school, I attended Acquire the Fire, a Christian youth conference, with my church youth group. The speaker talked about Jesus' desire to burn our dead branches in the fire of God's love. I felt like I had a lot of dead branches in my life at that time. The message touched me deeply and so when the altar call was given, I accepted Jesus as my Savior.

The following fall, I started college at the University of Evansville with majors in Archaeology, Biblical Studies and Classics. My dream was to find the chariots in the Red Sea. It was during college that my Christian walk really began to grow. My Bible classes and my participation in the Christian groups on campus were instrumental in establishing my beliefs, my understanding of Scripture, and my practice.

Following my freshman year, I had a spinal fusion. I had been diagnosed with scoliosis in one of the random screenings at school in the fourth grade. Finally, it had progressed enough that surgery was deemed to be necessary. It was during recovery that I began to sense God's call into ministry. I resisted it for about 6 months, but during that time I spoke to friends, my mentor, my pastors, and my teacher. It became clear that God was speaking. I recall one story that my mom had never told me before. Prior to my birth, she had 2 miscarriages. She was devastated, thinking her chances of ever having a child were slim. So, she began to pray Hannah's prayer—that if God would only give her a child, she would dedicate him to the Lord. She went on to share that when I went into that operating room, she gave me to God. The timing of my sense of call and that act of surrender by my mom was too much of a coincidence to ignore. So, I said yes to the call and headed off to seminary at Emory University.



Our new pastor and his family being introduced on June 26, their first Sunday at Oak Hills UMC. *Left to right:* Ashlyn, Jeffrey, Melissa, and Justin Fuhrmann.

A Message from Our Pastor continues on the next page

A Message from Our Pastor

continued from page 1

Doors began to close in the Lutheran Church, and I remembered how my mentor, who had passed away a few months earlier, said I would make a good teacher. I redefined my sense of call and began to pursue ministry in the college arena. I pursued doctoral studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and ultimately took a position as an adjunct teaching Bible at Olivet Nazarene University. I taught there three years, but when I began to apply for full time positions, every place I applied wanted ministry experience. That led me to pursue ministry in the United Methodist Church. At first my plan was to return to teaching, but God had other plans. I sensed that this was where I was supposed to be, so I dropped out of the Ph.D.

program and gave myself fully to the call to serve God in the life of the church.

I look forward to this next phase in ministry and getting to know you all a little better. I hope that you will take advantage of one of the meet the pastor opportunities coming up in the next few weeks. This is a great way for us to get to know each other and for me to hear the heartbeat and pulse of the church.

God Bless,

Pastor Justin

News and Happenings—Don't Miss a Single Blessing!

Plan to Attend a Meet-the-Pastor Session

Welcome to **Pastor Justin Fuhrmann** and his family! Their first Sunday at Oak Hills UMC was June 26. **Mary Flannery** is organizing meet-the-pastor small group meetings so that we can get to know our new shepherd. A sign-up sheet will be passed during Sunday morning worship or you can text or call Mary at 513-378-7085 to sign up or to let her know you can host a session in your home. The next scheduled session is **Wednesday, July 6, at 2 p.m.** at the church (all welcome). There are also sessions scheduled for 7/11, 7/14 (TOGA—see below), 7/20 (full), 7/28, and more to be scheduled.



Thanks to everyone who helped with Vacation Bible School the week of June 20-24, 2022. It was a tremendous blessing and so much fun welcoming the children and their families.

Zoom Prayer Meeting Every Wednesday

Plan to join the Zoom intercessory prayer meeting every Wednesday from **6:45 to 7:30 p.m.** An email is sent each week to the church-wide email list with the link for the meeting. If you aren't on the list ask Pastor Fuhrmann to send you the Zoom link. Zoom is a free app that allows face-to-face meetings. "Intercessory prayer" is simply prayer for others. You can pray silently in agreement with others or offer your own prayers. There is a time to share concerns prior to the prayer time. If you can't attend the meeting, please consider praying during that time for the needs of the church, community, and world.

TOGA Is Back!

Thursdays on Green Acres (TOGA) is back! This small group that paused during the pandemic resumes on **Thursday** (of course), **July 14**, at the home of Bob and Sue Schloss, 5609 Green Acres Court, Cincinnati, OH 45248. Come for **pizza at 6:30 p.m.** followed by a meet-the-pastor **time with Pastor Justin at 7 p.m.** Not sure what TOGA is all about? Come to this first session!

Going forward, TOGA will meet the first and third Thursdays of each month at 7 p.m. at the Schloss residence. Each session will explore a different Bible topic from a variety of Scriptures. No need to prepare—come as you are!

Finance/Ad Board Faces Big Decisions

Finance Committee and Administrative Board will meet **Monday, July 11** at the church. **Finance meets at 6:30 p.m. and Ad Board at 7 p.m.** Meetings are open to the entire congregation and committee chairs are urged to attend. In addition to standard reports the upcoming Ad Board meeting will discuss and vote on the recommendation for the Ebenezer house.

Sports Card Show Welcomes Community

The next Sports Card Show will be **August 13, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.** at the church. Plan to come mingle with your sports-minded neighbors. See John Wieman for details. Ω

Opening Our Spirit Ears in God's Creation

by Diane Cordell

Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. (Matthew 15:29)

As I am writing this, my kitchen is covered with boxes and bags as we pack up for our annual Fourth of July trek to Cumberland Falls State Park in the Appalachian Mountains for the Spencer Family Reunion. The family has been doing this for nearly 50 years and Alan and his cousins are now the senior generation. We reserve a circle of cabins and each family has one, and we do community meals at supper. Alan and I have not been for three years due to Covid and my surgery, and all our boys and grands will be there. In addition to the 70 plus family members it is good to spend some time in the woods, hike to Cumberland Falls, and enjoy vistas of the beautiful Cumberland River.

There is something about nature that can help us relax and also open up our relationship with God. Here are some ways this can happen.

God's creation stirs an attitude of awe and praise. This is easy to see with the vast expanse of the ocean or the majesty of the mountains, but it can work in our back yard too. Look at the trees, feel the breeze through the leaves, smell the flowers, see the colors of the blossoms and the grass, notice the intricate weave of a spider's web, or watch a squirrel gather food. Praise the Creator.

Being in nature heightens our awareness of God's presence. It's a great place to practice the discipline of solitude. Without the distractions of our modern world we can often open our Spirit ears to hear God. Also, turn off the news of war, politics, disunity, and scare tactics, and turn on the presence of God. It's so much easier to talk with him when you erase the bombardment of things begging for our attention. God waits for us to come to Him.

Jesus set an example of spending time in nature. Of course, at the time he lived society wasn't so crowded or so noisy, but he often made a conscious effort to walk by the sea or visit the mountains. Also, remember that the above Scripture takes place right before he addressed a large crowd—teaching, healing, and feeding the people. Taking some time alone with His Father, in the world He created, seemed to be helpful in preparing Jesus to do His work on Earth.

Well, I'm headed to the mountains. In addition to loving on the family, I intend to stand in awe of one of the largest US waterfalls, take an early walk on the trails, and relax on the tree-lined porch of our cabin. I know that God will be there and ready to commune with me. Enjoy your summer outdoors. It's not an excuse to neglect your prayer time but an opportunity to grow close to God in His world! Ω

