



Pastor Article

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciples, the one Jesus loved, and said, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they have put him!' So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ... Then Simon Peter ... arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of line lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. ... Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying?' 'They have taken my Lord away,' she said, 'and I don't know where they have put him.' At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. 'Woman,' he said, 'why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for? Thinking he was the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them' (Jn 20:1-17).

Imagine what it would have been like to be Mary. As the story opens, she sets out to go to the tomb. Just two days earlier, she had been at the foot of the cross when Jesus was crucified. Jesus had had a major impact on her life. According to tradition, he had delivered her from 7 demons. Because of that, she gave her life. But now he was gone. The ache of her loss must have been unbearable that morning as she made the long journey down to the tomb. As far as she could see, it was over. She never thought it would end like this. She had incredible hopes and dreams, but now there was nothing left but pain.

The entire focus of this story is on her grief. Nine times we hear the word tomb. Four times we are told that she

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## April 2024 The Oak Notes

is weeping. John doesn't even record a proclamation from the angels that Jesus is risen. All they say is: "Why are you weeping?" Mary is hoping to get just a little bit of relief. A little bit of comfort from being in the presence of Jesus' body. But when she gets there, they unthinkable has happened. The stone has been rolled away. Jesus' body is gone and the tomb is empty. I have to imagine that in that moment the darkness in her life became a little bit darker. It had to have been like pouring salt on an open wound. She is hurting. She is grieving. She just wants to be close to him and now he is gone.

All she can see is the situation. All she can see is her pain. All she can see is the hopelessness she faces. She is completely blinded to any other possibility. So much so that she doesn't even recognize Jesus. It isn't until Jesus calls her name that her eyes are opened and even then all she wants to do is cling to the tomb. In fact: Jesus has to say to her: "Don't hold onto me!" Stop clinging to the tomb! I am risen!

You see: It's not our tombs that have the final word. It's the resurrection of Jesus Christ! Easter says: Death gives way to life. Defeat gives way to victory. Hopelessness gives way to hope. Tears give way to joy. The question is: Will we let go of our tombs? Will we stop clinging to the past? Will we let go of our pain and our hurt? Will we allow the good news of the resurrection to pierce the darkness of our soul?

The message of Easter is this: If it is dead, if it looks dead, appears dead, or seems dead, it doesn't have to stay that way. Jesus Christ is risen to bring new hope and new life into the deadest, driest, most hopeless places of human life. He is risen. He is not here. Stop clinging to the tomb. A new day is here!

Happy Easter!

Pastor Justin



### Administrative Board Topics of Interest



1) We are currently in the process of terminating our contract with our current janitorial service. The quality of cleanliness in the church has decreased lately and attempts to address it have not brought any meaningful change. Both the Trustees and the SPPRC recommended the board hire a custodian rather than contract with a new cleaning company. We have elected to hire Donna Patrick, who will begin on Monday, April 1. In general, she will work Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 4 hours each day, for 12 hours a week. She comes to us with a wealth of experience. In the past, she served as the custodian at Whitewater Crossing and also at Miami Whitewater during Pastor Justin's tenure as pastor there. We are excited to have her join us in ministry. Please join us in welcoming Donna to our church staff!

2) Over the next few months, the church board will be wrestling with what it looks like to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, seeking to discern a clear definition and picture of a disciple, our vision for developing disciples of Jesus Christ, our disciple-making path, and how we effectively communicate that picture.

3) We are currently in the process of renovating the old Bridgetown parsonage with the hope to rent it out by the beginning of April. A potential renter is currently lined up and the house is ready to go! This will be an additional source of revenue for the church and will help us move toward a balanced budget.

4) Over the next few months, we will be painting Wilke chapel in preparation for launching a teen after-school ministry in the fall. We are looking for donations of old but working video-game systems/games, gently used board games that teens will enjoy, ping pong paddles/net/balls, and a foosball or pool table. We received a Go Grant of \$5000 from the West Ohio Conference for this project.

5) The board adopted the following priority and timeline list for upcoming renovation projects: Wilke chapel renovation for youth after school ministry (second quarter 2024); painting of the fellowship hall (fall 2024). Transformation of the current "prayer room" into a hospitality suite (2025). If you would like to contribute to these projects over and above your current offerings please give to the renovation fund.

6) We continue to be in need of substitute teachers for kids and youth Sunday School as well as a few people who would be willing to man the nursery on an as needed basis on Sunday morning. In addition, we are looking for help for Vacation Bible School in July. This need has become even greater with the loss of Amit and Lorna. If you are interested, please see Pastor Justin or Kathy Cramerding.





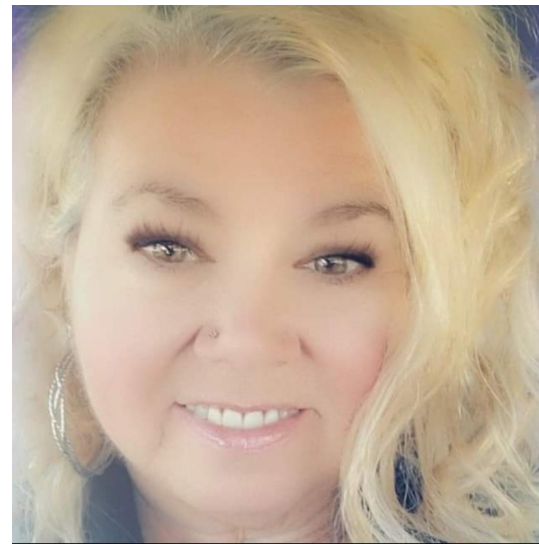
### Bible Studies

Sunday School 9 am  
 Women's Group: Mon 10 am  
 Gospel of John: Tues 6:30 pm  
 Pastor's Study (Mark): Wed 2 pm  
 John's Study: Thursday, 10:30 am  
 TOGA: 1st and 3rd Thursday @ 5609  
 Green Acres Ct. Cincinnati, Ohio



### Welcome Donna Patrick!

I'm a westside gal. I love being a mom and caregiver. God has blessed me with two special needs young adults. My daughter is Jennifer and my son Bobby. I love to volunteer. I've been blessed with many talents. Love a variety of crafts, painting, sewing, wood-working, power tools, gardening, landscaping, and baking, to name a few. I have dance, cheerleading and baton twirling background, love to coach. I have done life with my Bible study group for the past fourteen years. I get joy out of cleaning God's house. One of my favorite songs is Amazing Grace.



Worship – Sunday, 10:30 am

Sissy's Pantry – Wed 6:30-8:00 pm

Zoom Prayer – Thursday, 11 am



### Announcements

- 4/1 – Office Closed: Easter Holiday
- 4/1 – Trustees Meeting for April Canceled
- 4/3 – UMW Luncheon, 12 pm
- 4/7 – Risk Taking Missions, 12 pm
- 4/8 – Finance 6:30 pm; Board Meeting 7 pm
- 4/14 – Family Board Game Night, 6-9 pm
- 4/19 – Young at Heart, 7 pm
- 4/20 – Great Miami River District Super Serve Saturday
- 4/20 – Sports Card Show, 9 am – 3 pm
- 4/24 – Community Dinner, 6 pm
- 4/26 – Arts and Crafts, 7 pm
- 4/23-5/4 – General Conference

### Online Giving

Do you know you can now give on our church website? Simply go to [www.oakhillsumc.org](http://www.oakhillsumc.org) and click give

in the bar at the top of the page or scan the QR code below and go directly to our online



# OHUMC Family Ministries



The Easter Party and Egg Hunt was a great success. We had 89 children present plus parents for a total of around 160 people. Children watched a video discussing the meaning of Easter, made a craft, had cupcakes, and enjoyed an Easter Egg Hunt out in the yard. This is our largest attendance to date.



With Amit and Lorna's departure, Pastor Justin and Kathy have recruited Kim Warman and Melissa Fuhrmann to help with this year's Vacation Bible School. Melissa will be leading the opening and closing. Kim will be taking on the administrative and recruitment side. Amit has graciously agreed to still help with the construction of the set. There will be a meeting after church on April 14 to determine this year's theme, select curriculum, and to begin getting things rolling. Due to Pastor's vacation during our "normal" week in June, we have decided to delay VBS to July this year. Tentative date is July 8-12.



We will be hosting a Back to School Bash in August this year. We would like every ministry in the church to take part in this event. There will be a meeting after church on July 21 to discuss. It would be helpful if a representative from every ministry in the church could be present to help with our planning.

