

# THE ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

## Thank you, Thank you!

*From the Desk of Connie ...*

Many thanks to all for the wonderful cards and gifts I have received. I hope you all have a great safe 2017 year! I look forward to another GREAT year at Asbury!! Muchas gracias para todos por las tarjetas and regalos de Christmas este ano. Que todos pasen un Feliz Navidad y Feliz Ano Nuevo!



## Volunteer Spotlight Corner

Norma Natrass is our Spotlight Volunteer for this edition of the Circuit Rider. Seen here signing up residents for a box of food, Norma who is a retired Flint school teacher, comes to help in so many ministries we could not begin to list them all here. From baking to helping with our response to the Flint Water Crisis we are proud to have Norma as a part of our Asbury family.



One Candle for Each of the Four Sundays before Christmas & a Christ Candle

## The Candles of Advent

*Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself.*

Luke 2:19

Asbury celebrates the four Sundays before Christmas by lighting one candle for each Sunday that signifies our life together in Christ. There is no prescribed meaning to the candles although a popular notion are peace, hope, love and joy. On the first Sunday, we light a candle signifying peace. On the second Sunday we light the same candle as the first Sunday and then we light a second candle signifying hope and so on. We then light a fifth candle on Christmas Eve that we call the Christ Candle.

But there is much more to this ritual than lighting candles that mean words which are themselves ambiguous. What does it mean to have peace? When we talk about the peace of Christ or when we say that rebirth is often accompanied by a “peace that is beyond understanding” what does this mean? Even more important, how does this affect what we do the rest of the week? We usually read a

### Neighborhood Connection

Every week truckloads of food and water are delivered to Asbury for distribution. Asbury serves thousands of families each month in our parking lot, but hundreds of families are unable to come to us so we go to them. If you know of a family in need, or have any questions, you may call Reggie at 810-308-8648.

### Asbury Food Pantry...

Every week individuals and families turn to Asbury to help them supplement their food supply. Asbury is a partner with the Genesee County Food Bank where we can purchase at a big discount. WE NEED YOUR HELP with food items, including meats, and diapers. We also need your financial contributions.



### FlintAsbury.org

Join in on the conversation taking place on our blog. Pastor Tommy posts his reflections during the week along with other special guests. Let us know if you have information or other content that you wish to share.

### Christmas Food Boxes

We handed out 23 Christmas food boxes to families in need from Asbury UMC, Potter School and from our surrounding neighborhood. Thank you to all that helped get these boxes out, especially to families without transportation!!



short explanation or reflection each Sunday to help answer these questions. It is important to keep this simple ritual meaningful. Otherwise, there is little reason to do it and sooner or later a bright youngster will ask the obvious question, "Why bother?"

We bother because this simple ritual has so much meaning. So much so that it is worth living with the ambiguity. In fact, it may be the ambiguity that makes this ritual so rich. By making statements of faith about what it means to have peace, hope, love and joy we are able to come together around what it means to be Christian. What it means to follow Christ in a world where Christian too often means hypocrite. A label that Christ Himself used to describe persons in power who had a problem with Him. How we live out lives that embody peace, hope, love and joy matters a great deal. What they mean to us has eternal impact.

Matt Rawle offers food for thought on the topic of peace in particular questioning whether our usual definition of peace as tranquility or calm really fits. For example, when we say that Jesus is the Prince of Peace as we read in Isaiah 9:6 are we saying that there is no conflict? What if we think of peace as the opposite of fear? The angel announcing Jesus' birth to the shepherds said not to fear for the good news sang out by the angelic chorus was that peace was being brought to them and to us (Luke 2:8-15). Might we light a candle that signifies peace and its light calm our fears of what it means to follow Christ? <sup>1</sup>

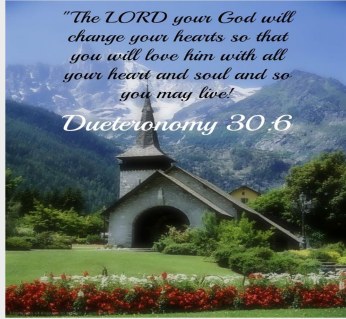
This year on the second Sunday of Advent the candle that we lit signified hope. Hope keeps us moving toward God's light. Hope is our destination and so we live with purpose instead of wandering as though we are lost.<sup>2</sup> The third Sunday our candle stood for the love that we are to have for God and one another. While our word was love our meaning was about transformation that requires that we let go of our obsession over material things and consider what God wants. The candle that we lit last Sunday is a symbol of our joy. When we sing *Joy to the World* we, like the angels singing to the shepherds, are announcing that God is with us.

The candle that we light on Christmas Eve is a symbol for Jesus Christ who brought light into a world darkened by sin. May you keep Christmas well. God bless us everyone. Merry Christmas.

Pastor Tommy

<sup>1</sup> Rawle, Matt. *The Redemption of Scrooge*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> McFey, Marcia. *God Bless Us Every One: The Redemption of Scrooge*. © 2016 WorshipDesignStudio.com.



*"The LORD your God will change your hearts so that you will love him with all your heart and soul and so you may live!"*  
*Deuteronomy 30:6*

### Worship Guide

- Traditional Service
- 10:00 AM
- WELCOME
- JOYS AND CONCERNS
- OPENING HYMN
- CALL TO WORSHIP
- ANTHEM
- READING OF SCRIPTURE
- CHILDREN'S MESSAGE
- HYMN OF PREPARATION
- TEACHING
- PASTORAL PRAYER
- OFFERING & BLESSING
- CLOSING HYMN
- BENEDICTION
- POSTLUDE

### Change in Worship Service

Starting times for Worship have changed:

Bible Study	10:00 am
Traditional Worship	10:00 am
Coffee Break	11:00 am
New Beginnings	11:30 am

### In Our Prayers

Curtis Young	Rachel Bastine
Norma Buzzard	Carmen Misner
Merle Supernaw	Barbara McIvor
Shirley Moose	Nancy Elston
Austin & MarySuffle	Shirley Craig
Mary Armstrong	Sarah Tanner
Elizabeth Wright	Judy Tanner
Charlayne Oram	Mary Lyons
Johnathon Misner	

*FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE*

Sharon George Elaine Lamoreaux

### The Light of the World

Every year I look forward to Christmas Eve worship with great anticipation. I plan for the service to be special, full of music and thought-provoking scenes. My hope is that all who attend will leave a little more in the true spirit of Christmas than when they arrived. A lot has happened this last year. The water crisis is the most notable. We built a hoop house this year, planted orchards and hosted a Christmas concert, a District Christmas party and 150 college students. We also gave away thousands of cases of bottled water and boxes of food. Yes, a lot has happened this year.



The Night Everything Changed

Why is it that while writing a reflection in preparation for Christmas Eve, my thoughts sound more like a year in review than a reflection on the birth of our Lord? Perhaps it is because the birth of our Lord is what gives meaning to the events of this year. That which we celebrate during the Christmas season is what serving others is all about. "That's what Christmas is all about Charlie Brown." Not just Christmas but all that we do. It is Jesus Christ and not our stuff or even our doing that its all about.

Jesus Christ was born in the midst of a crisis. The known world was ruled by the powerful. Violence against any and all resistance was the norm. The story of Jesus' birth is so unlike any other story that just in it's telling, listeners ought to be captivated. Unless they are missing the story, or they simply do not believe it to be true. The story is a story that can be hard to believe in the mist of the continuing saga of the powerful keeping the less powerful silent.

It doesn't help us get over our doubts when watch the news. The intensity of the reporting brings violence in vivid high definition inside our homes. These stories hold our interest by bringing the horror of the story and excite our senses of compassion, empathy, anger and fear. How can we as a people who believe that God lives among us sort out such disturbing drama? If God can be born as a helpless baby to fulfill the promise of peace why can't God protect innocent people?

Can you imagine a world where the ideology of the world matched the ideology of Jesus Christ? This is difficult to imagine when ideology is so ingrained within each of us that to imagine that every person could be on the same page is a stretch. Can you at least imagine a small group of people who work passionately to be the people that Christ expects them to be? I can. In fact, I can imagine a church like the one that Jesus Christ



## Book Club News



We continue with Part 3 of our study, *Trusting the Covenant* through the rest of 2016. The prophets are rich in Biblical tradition and Lamentations are too often ignored. It is always the right time to join in. Your insights and questions are welcomed.

Our goal is to continue to “widen our circle” and so we hope that you will join in on our discussion. We meet each Tuesday at Noon. Come join us for a light lunch, fellowship and discussion. Our food selections have been fantastic and we always have plenty to share. We are always on the lookout for our next book, video lesson or topic. Your participation and suggestions are greatly appreciated.

Dec 27 Vacation

Jan 3 Isaiah 40-43, 56

Jan 10 Isaiah 58-61, 63-66

Jan 17 Ezra

Jan 24 Nehemiah

Did you know that Isaiah is thought to be three books commonly called 1st, 2nd & 3rd Isaiah?

came to build and left to His followers to carry out the work. Can't you? I can imagine a church where we take serious the mission of Christ - "to bring Good News to the poor...to proclaim that captives will be released...that the blind will see...that the oppressed will be set free...and that the time of the Lord's favor has come." And I believe that you can imagine such a church as well.

Paul reminds us that it is most often fear that holds us back. Fear that can be based on a multitude of what can seem like good reasons. But just as the angels said to the Shepherds, "fear not...for unto you a savior is born," we can choose to put our fears aside and to trust in the One who was, who is and who always will be. The alpha and omega. The beginning and the end. We can trust in the Messiah who was born to redeem and reconnect all of creation to our Creator. May this Christmas bring you good news that a Savior was born and you do not need to be afraid any more.

Pastor Tommy

### *Ways to get involved...*

**Worship** helps us to connect with God through music, scripture, biblical teaching, prayer, reflection, adoration and fellowship.

**Video & Sound Support** – We are looking for persons willing to support worship and other events by running our media control center. Training available.

**Music Ministry** – Join the Asbury Choir or Praise Team. We are looking for vocalists and musicians.

**Community Gardening** – The Asbury Center for Nutrition has several gardens, orchards and a hoop house that need your attention.

**Neighborhood Connect** is a ministry that assesses individual gifts and passions and looks for ways to bring people together in ways that improve relationships and our community.

**Food & Water Giveaway** – Join us on Thursdays at 8:30 AM to help give away food and bottled water.

**Pantry** - We need food items, including meats, paper products; personal items diapers, and financial support.

**Social Media** allows us to tell others about the work that God is doing. All of us can help enhance our presence in the social media by posting on our Facebook and utilizing our website for blogging.

**Student Housing** - the Asbury House offers local college students a way to use their gifts and passions together with their faith in building a better neighborhood.

**Women's Circles** - The women of Asbury meet regularly in small groups.

**Pastor's Book Club** meets each Tuesday at 12 for fellowship, food and learning.

**What's coming up...?**

**SAD: Spiritual Affective Disorder**

*Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises over you. Isaiah 60:1*

Announcing a new worship Series beginning January 1, 2017



We begin the New Year with Epiphany Sunday when we celebrate the gift of divine enlightenment. God revealed the birth of the Messiah to non-Jews who traveled to Bethlehem to worship the Christ child. We are in the midst of winter when we have longer periods of darkness. Winter can be a time of Seasonal Affective Disorder when the lack of sunlight affects our moods and ability to cope effectively.

Spiritual Affective Disorder can also be a factor as we lead lives that are too crowded, busy, overcommitted, sometimes disturbing and uncertain. At the turn of this new year, we will explore everyday life activities that can become spiritual practices—deepening our experience of a meaningful life and make us more “light-hearted.”



**Dec 24 & 25 Notes & Reflections – Keeping Christmas Well**

*Suddenly, God's angel stood among ... "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born...Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself.*

*Luke 2:9-11, 19 MSG*

A series of horizontal lines for writing reflections, starting below the Luke 2:9-11, 19 MSG reference and extending down the page.

**Coming up this week ...**

Dec 26	Mon		
Dec 27	Tues		
Dec 28	Wed	10:00am	Food Giveaway
		4:00pm	Youth Recreation
Dec 29	Thurs	10:00am	Food Giveaway
		10:00am	Water Delivery
		7:00pm	Choir Practice
Dec 30	Fri		
Dec 31	Sat	12Noon	Youth Recreation
Jan 1	Sun	10:00am	Bible Study
		10:00am	Traditional Worship
		11:00am	Coffee Break
		11:30 am	New Beginnings Worship

***A SAFE AND HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!!***

Look for announcements scrolling on our screen prior to the start of worship. Email announcements by the Friday before to [FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com](mailto:FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com)

**In our worship service**

Greeter	Norma	
Children's Time	Rev Tommy	
Candle Lighting	Karen	
Usher	Jim, Anthony, Shawn	
Media Support	Jim	
Nursery	Norma	
Coffee Break	No Coffee Hour	
Worship Leader	Stephanie	10:00am

**Last Week for Worship**

Attendance 47    Offering \$2,141

**Coffee Break**

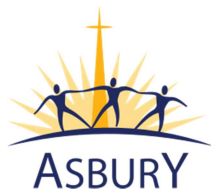
Plan to meet outside the sanctuary each Sunday after the first service for coffee, tea, snacks, conversation and so on. The music will start when it is time to wrap up and head in for *New Beginnings*.

**Asbury Staff**

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor
Jim Craig	Church Council Chair Asbury CDC Board Chair
Connie Portillo	Office Secretary
Kathy Howe	Choir Director
Rebekah Britton	Organist
Phone/Fax	810-235-0016 (call first when faxing)

***WELCOME! - Beinvenidos!***

We are happy you are here to worship with us today. Please fill out an information card and place it in the offering plate in order that we may be able to serve you further.

***OUR VISION – Nuestro Vision***

*We envision a community in love with God, one another and our neighbors, evidenced through the transformation of ourselves and our neighborhood*

***WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS!***

**2017 Worship Schedules:** If you are responsible for creating a worship support schedule - Please get them to Connie ASAP. If you are interested in leading worship or supporting worship through video and audio technology support talk to Pastor Tommy.

**2017 Annual Local Church Report:** *These reports have all been mailed out, so if you have a report to do and you didn't receive it by now, please let me know.* Keep in mind the report has to be submitted by January 31<sup>st</sup> but I need your reports **by January 23<sup>rd</sup>** in order for me to enter all data in the computer. If you have any questions, please call the office 235-0016.

**No Pastor Book Club:** Please note, there will not be Book Club on Tuesday, December 27<sup>th</sup>. Mark your calendar...



***Please put your cell phone on stun!***

***Por favor poner el teléfono en silencio!***

In order that we may be fully present in worship, please set your cell phone to silent mode. Tweets & Facebook posts are encouraged if they are relevant to our worship.