

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Welcome to the Asbury Community

Christmas Blessing

God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Matthew 5:7 (NLT)

In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus begins His teaching with the *Sermon on the Mount* and Jesus begins the *Sermon on the Mount* with blessings. We sometimes call these blessings the *Beatitudes*. Jesus declares blessing for all who are poor in spirit, who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers. Jesus also declares blessings on all who are persecuted because of righteousness or who are insulted because of their belief in Him.

Jesus says along with these divine blessings that the blessing will come in the form of gifts. These gifts are quite impressive and do not fit under a Christmas tree. These gifts are the “take a look outside” sized gifts where even the driveway is not large enough to hold them. The divine gifts include the kingdom of heaven, comfort, the earth, being filled, receiving mercy, seeing God, and being called children of God. “Rejoice and be glad,” Jesus says with these blessings, “because your reward is great.”

Jesus is talking about reciprocity - right? Or at least Jesus is leaning on the wisdom that we reap

what we sow? The truth is that Jesus is talking about much more than receiving back what we give. Jesus is getting down to the nitty gritty of the meaning of Christmas, the meaning of life itself. God has shown us mercy that is unearned. A mercy that we call grace because we deserve punishment but God offers love instead. There is something about us that only God can see that we hide from others in the same way we hide the candy wrappers and empty potato chip bags so that we aren't found out.

The Beatitudes are in the indicative & not the imperative mood. In other words, the Beatitudes are

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Christmas Dreams

At Asbury we have been celebrating the Christmas season week to week by considering ways that we can simplify Christmas. Week One we talked about going local - looking to the people around us rather than Walmart or Amazon for our shopping. The next week we talked about spending less on things that

won't last and looking for more valuable gifts that bring us closer to each other and to God. As we work together to simplify Christmas our dream is that we will enjoy this season more than ever and avoid being stressed out.

What do you dream about? How many of you as you think about your answer are

thinking of a dream that you already certain will not happen? How many of you when you dream...your dream is beyond this world so to speak? At least beyond what you are able to do and perhaps beyond what an entire city or a nation could do?

Dreams that seem impossible require imagination to have them seem real. Dreams that are beyond our own ability may require that our imagination reach out to others.

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Special points of interest:

> **Neighborhood Connection** is delivering bottled water. Call the City of Flint at 810-410-1138 for information. This service is for persons who are disabled and/or unable to receive water in any other way.

> **Local Church Report to Annual Conference** is due January 30, 2018. If you have a report to do, please work on it as you can and return it back to me by no later than January 15th.



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Christmas Dreams

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We may dream about receiving a special gift. We may dream about winning a race, or a competition. Cyndi and I love to watch the show *The Voice*. When the contestants talk about their experience on *The Voice* many of them will say that getting selected to stay in the competition is a "dream come true" for them.

When I asked our teenage daughter, Gabriella, about her dream she gave me examples of situations where she felt desperation. In one dream she was at school and she described her experience as "they went 5th wave on us" - I presume referring to the movie that was popular a while back. She also told me about dreams where she was running and came to the edge of a cliff where she struggled not to fall off.

When we think about dreams we are usually talking about an experience that will take a lot of things coming together for our dream to come true. It seems like when we are younger our dreams are less bridled - less possible, than when we are adults. As we grow older we hopefully grow

a bit wiser and being wiser we are more prone to keeping our dreams contained to experiences that are more within our power - more practical - more believable.

Christmas is a time when it can be easier, even for grownups, to allow our dreams to reach a bit further out there than our dreams at other times of the year. We even sing about the sort of dreams that children will have on the night of Christmas Eve in anticipation of presents that will await them the next day. Magical dreams that are not plausible.

When we are under stress it would not be unusual for us to dream about a time when we would be free of stress. The Bible shares stories of people under stress. Some are away from home in a strange land and their freedom is limited. In other stories we read about persons who are struggling to get by or persons who have a debilitating illness. The Bible also tells us about dreams. One dream in particular was sort of the mother of all dreams. It was the dream that someday there would be a Messiah - a King - someone who would save us from whatever stress we are experiencing.

The prophets shared this dream with the people of their time and the words that God spoke through them are still relevant today. It is the story of a dream come true. But not the sort of dream that is pragmatic or practical. Not a dream that we could do for ourselves perhaps with the help of friends or parents. This was a dream like no other dream. A dream well beyond our abilities and even beyond our imagination. A dream that only God can give us and a dream that only God can deliver on.

This is what we celebrate each year during this holiday season that we call Christmas. The realization of a dream that is still unfolding. A dream that is already coming true even while we anticipate so much more. May this season of hope be special for each of you. May you dream dreams beyond anything that could ever happen. And may God reveal to you the dream that God has in mind for you. And may you know that God can and will make your dream come true.

Merry Christmas!

Pastor Tommy

Christmas Blessing ... continue from page 1

announcements and not commandments. The Beatitudes are an announcement of how the world is - how it operates and the damage that is left behind. Jesus tells the crowds the raw truth about the human condition and what God is doing about it.

To simplify Christmas among other things is to recognize that when we celebrate Christmas we celebrate the present, the future and the past. We celebrate the birth of a child that took place two Thousand years ago, born to a teenager, who was chosen by God to carry in her womb the divine game-changer - God Himself - who will be born a man in conditions that by to-

day's standards were reserved for the most desperate.

God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn it, but to announce God's blessing on all those who do not deserve to be blessed. God's blessing cannot be earned, and we are to be cautioned by this announcement that when we find ourselves thinking that another person is underserving, then this blessing may miss us.

We also celebrate the future. We celebrate the unfolding of a future world where no child is born in a barn because there is not room for the family where profit-motive trump's compassion. A world where the poor pros-

per and get the breaks and the healthcare and the rich are left out. It is a world that seems utopian by today's standards. A world where poverty has been abolished - where disease is no more - where we no longer abuse our planet nor each other. It is a world that humanity has proven incapable of creating by our own power.

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Christmas Blessing ...continued from Page 2

We celebrate a time when Jesus will return as He promised and the world will be judged, not by human-standards, but by divine standards.

And we celebrate the here-and-now. We celebrate the present day. We get together with family and friends or we sit alone in regret. Either way, Christmas has power in the now. Christmas has the power of the present moment. We are amazed and appreciative of light displays and festive decorations. We enjoy cookies and treats, decorated with the signs of celebration:

Christmas trees, jingle bells with glitter and bows. We give gifts to persons both close to us and far away. We remember because we are reminded to consider others. There is a festive

feel in the air we breathe. The whole world seems to be celebrating at once. We celebrate the present day.

Mercy may feel like something that we give and receive in a reciprocal arrangement. But this is not how God's grace works. Open your gift of grace this Christmas. Receive your divine blessing. While your ultimate gift may be yet to come there is so much to enjoy right now that you won't want to miss. Look outside. See what God has done through the eyes of grace.

Merry Christmas and may God fill you with good things.

Pastor Tommy

⇒ 2017 Local Church Report ⇐

The End of the Year Local Church Report will be due January 30, 2018. I have your forms in your mailboxes. Please work on it accordingly and try to get it back to me by January 15, 2018. If anyone has any questions, or need extra forms, call the church office 235-0016.



In Our Prayers

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Curtis Young | Austin & Mary Suffle |
| Rachel Bastine | Shirley Craig |
| Norma Buzzard | Christopher Lewis |
| Merle Supernaw | Sarah Tanner |
| Barbara McIvor | Elizabeth Wright |
| Jonathon Misner | Judy Tanner |
| Nancy Auger | Mary Lyons |
| Pam Brotemarkle | Brenda |

FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| Sharon George | Shirley Moose |
| Elaine Lamoreaux | Carmen Misner |
| Mary Russell | Mary Nations |



Prayer is at the heart of our beliefs

Simplify Christmas Spend Less



Simplify Christmas - Advent 2017

“Work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare.”

Jeremiah 29:7

Book Club News

Hold onto your hoodie and slip on your Air Force One's. Our next topic for Tuesday's study group is the mysterious world of hip-hop. Here is what Amazon's website says about our next book, *The Hip-Hop Church*:*

Hip-hop is here. The beats ring out in our cities. Hip-hop culture is all around us: in the clothes youth wear, in the music they listen to, in the ways they express themselves. It is the language they speak, the rhythm they move to. It is a culture familiar with the hard realities of our broken world; the generation raised with rap knows about the pain. They need to know about the hope. Enter the hip-hop church.

Like the culture it rises from, the hip-hop church is relevant and bold. And it speaks to the heart. In this book, pastors Efrem Smith and Phil Jackson show the urgency of connecting hip-hop culture and church to reach a generation with the gospel of Jesus Christ. They give practical ideas from their urban churches and other

We have all heard the slogans encouraging us to support local businesses by going to them first before we jump online or look at big box chain stores. While there is a lot of wisdom in doing so it is hard to resist the discounted prices offered by Amazon and other large retailers. While it may be a stretch to think that God had in mind buying local when speaking through the prophet Jeremiah to command the people of the covenant to “work for the peace and propensity of

hip-hop churches about how to engage and incorporate rap, break dancing, poetry and deejays to worship Jesus and preach his Word.

Hip-hop culture is shaping the next generation. Ignoring it will not reduce its influence; it will only separate us from the youth moving to its rhythm. How will they hear Christ's message of truth and hope if we don't speak their language? And how can we speak their language if we don't understand and embrace their culture? Hear the beat. Join the beat. Become the beat that brings truth and hope to a hungry, hurting generation.

The authors of our next book are Efrem Smith and Phil Jackson. As President and CEO of World Impact and advocate for urban ministry, Efrem Smith is committed to church-planting in the city. Phil Jackson is the founder and lead pastor of the House Covenant Church (The House) known for offering Chicago's first Christ-centered, hip-hop worship has

the city where I sent you” there is a clear connection. The people were in exile. They were in a place that they would rather not be. Nevertheless God reminded them that the city where you are planted will determine your welfare.

But thinking of others does not need to be expensive. Jesus was born into a family who struggled to make end meet. Jesus experienced homelessness. He knew what it was like to rely on the generosity of others. Jesus was one of us. Yet He was God.

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service. For more than two decades, Phil has served God full-time on the front lines of urban youth ministry. You do not have to read the book to attend, but it does help with the discussion and what you receive back from it. Used copies of this book are available from the office for \$6.

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.

*Efrem Smith and Phil Jackson. *The Hip-Hop Church—Connecting with the Movement Shaping our Culture*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2005.

Leadership in Worship & Service

Welcome Team	Tony, Mirium, Christine
Children's Time	Rev Tommy
Candle Lighting	Karen
Ushers	Anthony, Jim
Production Team	Jim
Nursery	Norma
Worship Leaders	Michele
Coffee Hour	Rick

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor
Mark Vorenkamp	Children & Youth

Jim Craig	Leadership Chair
Connie Portillo	Office Secretary
Kathy Howe	Choir Director
Rebekah Britton	Piano & Organ
Kevin Croom	Farm to Table
Israel Unger	Business Development

Asbury Café

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 2nd service.

THANK YOU AND MUCHAS GRACIAS !!... FOR THE WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS CARDS AND GIFTS I HAVE RECEIVED FROM A LOT OF YOU!! MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAVE A SAFE NEW YEAR!!!



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Simplify Christmas Spend Less ... *continued from page 4*

He had a choice and He chose to hang out in the poor neighborhoods with people like us. And Jesus teaches us that heaven can exist right here. The Kingdom of God is not some far off place for the rich and famous. It is for us.

Whatever we have is enough. This Christmas, why not give only what you have rather than borrow against the future. Simply your Christmas by giving yourself. By sharing the gifts that God has given you with others. Jesus promises that you will always get more than you give. It depends on what you are looking for. The treasures that we cherish the most are the relationships. Come join us and build relationships that make a difference.

Dec 3 - Think Local

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help... Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken...

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Whether we are talking about sports or neighborhood improvement more gets accomplished when we work together. Think local is- more than a slogan and it is more than where we shop. Nevertheless, in this time of giving and spending, think about the peo-

ple you can bless with the shopping that you already do.

There are many people who own small businesses, their own families counting on increased Christmas season sales in order to have a happy holiday themselves. When you're considering the gifts that you need to buy for family members, consider buying them from people instead of corporations, using this holiday not only to bless your own family but also to bless another family. Some examples include food from local farmers and art from local artists.

Coming up this week

Neighborhood Deliveries/Water/Food

Dec 25 Mon MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Dec 26 Tues 12N Pastor Book Club

Dec 27 Wed 6:00pm Beginners Bible Study

Dec 28 Thurs 6:30pm Choir Practice

Dec 31 Sun 9:00am Traditional Worship

10:00am Connect Break

10:30am Contemporary Worship

12:00 N Café Closes

**Last Week for Worship
Attendance 53 Offering \$ 2,010**

Look for announcements scrolling on the our screen prior to the start of worship.

Email announcements by the Friday before to:

FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com



Ways to Connect

Donate –You can give online at FlintAsbury.org/donate

Music Ministry –We are looking for vocalists and musicians.

Community Gardening – The Asbury Farm needs volunteers.

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.

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 12Noon for fellowship, food and learning.



Prayer is at the heart of our beliefs

Welcome to the Asbury Community

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Neighborhood Connection



We envision a community in love with God, each other, and our neighbors evidenced by the transformation of ourselves and our neighborhood. We are a center for worship & spiritual growth, a center for connections and a center for health & wellness.

Our goal is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions

for the common good, where children grow into citizens who contribute to building and maintaining a vibrant neighborhood, and all residents are able to enjoy safety, good health, a culture that fosters life long learning and satisfying lives.

We believe that such an ambitious goal can never be attained without God's grace and abundance and Christ calls each of us to be disciples willing to share our witness through words and acts.

Simplify Christmas Spend Lessa new worship series

cont. from page 5

Dec 10 Spend Less

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy any where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:19-21

Who doesn't like to open a gift under the tree with our name on it? But whether it is a new iPhone or socks the stuff that we buy for each other just doesn't last. It also doesn't really satisfy us for very long. The iPhone X comes out and our existing phone seems out of date. Our favorite pair of socks wears out. We were created for more than socks and phones and Jesus Christ wants us to experience the joy that comes in knowing our Creator as a friend.

Dec 17 Give More

Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap.

Luke 6:38

We enjoy being around generous people. There is something special about an aunt who always has kind words or a hug just when we need it. Material generosity can be a veil for someone who craves attention and hasn't learned that love is not about the gifts we open. Love is about giving more of ourselves so that we can build authentic friendships that withstand the times when we don't have a way to give anything more than our love. Christmas is a time when we remember the gift that God gave to the world. The most precious gift of all. God gave Himself.

Dec 24 Extend Grace

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Matthew 5:7



Many of us will be spending time this Christmas with members of our family that we don't see too many other times during the year. Sometimes this includes people we would rather not be spending our time with. The bible is clear about how we are to handle people with regard to grace. So, instead of just handing over the card containing the gift card and giving a halfhearted "Merry Christmas," why not give a more worthwhile gift that God has given to each of us. Grace.

Dec 24 Christmas Eve

Don't be afraid! I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people.

Luke 2:10

Be sure to join us on Christmas Eve for a special celebration. The true meaning of Christmas is quite simple. God loves us so much and each one of us is special in God's sight.

Let us thank God for the greatest gift of all time. A gift that will last forever.

Pastor Tommy