

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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Human Thirst—Divine Water

I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared... God's home is now among his people!...I am making everything new!

Revelation 21:1, 3, 5

What an appropriate text to begin a new year. I began 2018 in the same way as I

have other years. I downloaded this year's version of the Upper Room's *Disciplines* - daily devotions that will keep me company and challenged in the weeks ahead. This text from Revelation is the selected text for the first day of the New Year. So I began 2018 with an epiphany shared

through scripture that has been given to prophets and ordinary persons throughout the centuries. God decides when newness overcomes the status quo - not humans.

Our Youth Coordinator, Mark, ended 2017 for us with a message on letting go of the past in preparation for accepting the present. The present arrives whether or not we cling to the past.

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Volume 18 Issue 7

January 7, 2018

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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Human Thirst—Divine Water ...continued from Page 1

Eventually, the weight of yesterdays becomes too heavy for us to carry with us. We begin dropping pieces with little control over which ones fall away and which ones stay, oftentimes not recognizing that what we are holding onto is an imposter that we have shaped into a past that never happened the way our brittle memory has shaped it. Eventually it is best to let go and make room for the present.

Only God bares the burden of foresight. God's creation comes along for the ride. But not as uninvolved passengers. God shapes the future through us and at times in spite of us. God occasionally offers insight without the specifics that our imagination shapes. We paint on a canvas in our minds that is hardly paint-by-number so we free-hand using our past as a guide.

God is not constrained by our past and certainly not by our re-creation of the past. Rather, God moves on allowing us to drag whatever we feel we cannot live without offering us ample opportunities to let go and replace our past and be filled with the present. God's invitation is open to all. "To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life."



An invitation to quench a thirst for a dryness that cannot be quenched any other way nor by any other source. Even the most inviting mountain streams of clear, cold water cannot satisfy our deepest yearning for God's presence. But can we let go of our burden and grasp the cup that God sits before us. A cup filling over with blessing. A gift freely given without cost.

Happy New Year. "Look, God's home is now among his people!"

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.

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.

Christmas Blessing ...continued from Page 2

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 ⇐

Please remember that the data is as of December 31, 2017. Any information that you report must reflect any membership changes, participation and financial information from January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017.



Shirley Moose

There will be a public celebration for Shirley on Saturday, January 20th at the Reigle Funeral Home Sunset Chapel located at 5501 W Pierson Road in Flushing. Visitation with family will be from 10:00 to 11:00 am and the service will be at 11:00 am. There is an online guest book at ReigleFuneralHome.com and an announcement through ABC Channel 12.

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 | Mary Nations |
| Elaine Lamoreaux | Carmen Misner |
| Mary Russell | |



Prayer is at the heart of our beliefs

Be the Talk

We kickoff the new year by embracing the present. The new year is a time when we make resolutions that we, all too often, give up on before February. God has already made us a new creation through Christ, so all we have to do is embrace that which God has already done. This frees us to let God show us His future for us and His Church.

On January 7 we begin our January worship series titled *Be the Talk*. As God continues to shape our future we continue to see visible signs of God's presence. God is with us but God is also on the move. God is leading us into a future of abundance. Be sure to join us each Sunday to learn more about how you can get connected.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem... I heard a loud shout saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them...I am making everything new!"

Revelation 21:1-3, 5 (NLT)

Book Club News

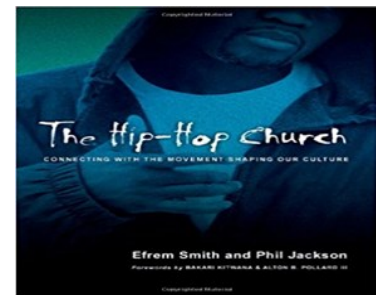
Hip-hop is here and pervasive. Hip-hop beats ring out in our cities. Hip-hop culture is all around us: in the clothes youth wear, in the music they listen to, in the ways they express themselves. It is the language they speak, the rhythm they move to. Hip-hop is a culture familiar with the hard realities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

Like the culture it rises from, the hip-hop church is relevant and certainly 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 hip-hop churches about how to engage and incorporate rap, break dancing, poetry and deejays to worship Jesus and preach his Word.

So hold onto your hoodie and slip on your Air Force One's. Our current topic for Tuesday's study group is the mysterious world of hip-hop as we read, study and discuss *The Hip-Hop Church*.^{*} Read the Introduction and Chapter One in preparation for January 9.

The authors argue that 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 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

Leadership in Worship & Service

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

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.

Asbury Staff

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

Be the Talk ... *continued from page 4*

Jan 7 - Redeemed

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

2 Corinthians 5:17

There is so much anxiety wrapped up in turning ourselves into “better people” when that work has already been done by God. We simply need to embrace Jesus and the change that was made through Him. Sounds easy so what’s the problem. The problem is that in our

anxiety we want to shape the future according to our plans only to discover that we seem to be missing something important.

Jan 14 - Change the Talk

...the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. 6 And among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your

whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.

James 3:5-6

We have all heard some version of the statement “Would you talk like that if Jesus was in the room?” Language is powerful. Language has the power to draw us closer together and the power to start wars that tear us apart. In Proverbs we read that “Kind words are like honey— sweet to the soul and healthy for the body” (Proverbs 16:24). And in Genesis we read that

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Coming up this week

Neighborhood Deliveries/Water/Food

- Jan 8 Mon**
- Jan 9 Tues** 12N Pastor Book Club
- Jan 10 Wed** 6:00pm Beginners Bible Study
- Jan 11 Thurs**
- Jan 14 Sun** 9:00am Traditional Worship
- 10:00am Connect Break
- 10:30am New Beginnings Contemporary Worship
- 12:00 N Café Closes

Last Week for Worship
Attendance 26 Offering \$ 1,958

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.

Be the Talka new worship series *cont. from page 5*

"At one time all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words" (Genesis 11:1).

Jan 21 - Walk the Talk

What good is it...if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions?...Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?... Unless faith produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

James 2:14-16

The writer of James offers advice on what it means to "walk the talk." God has redeemed us through Jesus Christ and when we truly believe this to be true we talk differently. Our words are a manifestation

of the love that God has shown us. And our faith is shown in how we spend our time and use our resources. Our response to God's grace tells the world what we truly believe.

Jan 28 - Be the Talk

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem... I heard a loud shout saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them...I am making everything new!"

Revelation 21:1-3, 5 (NLT)

John Wesley, a founder of Methodism, wrote in his journal about a time when he was strugg-

ling with his faith. This disturbed Wesley, a preacher, who asked his friend and advisor, Peter Bohler, what he should do. His friend responded "Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith." It is widely believed that this was a turning point for Wesley and advice that is widely applicable. How do we become the talk that we refer to as we mature spiritually? We accept redemption, we change how we talk, we walk the talk and eventually we become that which we talk about. We become faithful disciples of the One who redeemed us.



Pastor Tommy