

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Welcome to the Asbury Community

The Table



The topic of family dinners is more likely to sound like nostalgia than current reality. Situation comedies use family dinners to expose humorous quirks and interactions between family members only rarely illuminating the positive aspects of families eating together. Nevertheless, I will risk suggesting that there is something very special about being invited to a meal. Something that touches the heart.

Is it the invitation itself, the meal, or the interaction that causes us to want to be invited for a meal? I'm guessing it is all three at times and sadly none of the three at other times. An invitation to eat a meal with persons that rub us the wrong way or to eat a meal that is not satisfying does not sound like an inviting offer at all. More like torture.

These two polar opposite reactions can happen to us with invitations that

come our way even when accepting the invitation would prove to be an awesome experience. We blurt out "Will he or she be there?" potentially removing any sense of positive anticipation if the answer is yes, and taking away from the moment even in the case of a no answer. Our past experiences with invitations affect current invitations in powerful ways.

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The Circle of Life

Our relationships matter. They keep us balanced. Our relationships make all the difference. Whether life is joyful or sad, whether we flourish or diminish, whether we make a difference in the world or simply consume its resources. Healthy relationships make all the difference

beginning with our relationship with God.

All relationships take effort to keep them healthy. But it is my experience that if we strive to live in harmony with the world around us and with our own being, relationships seem effortless. It is the building and maintaining of walls that take away and do not give back. Walls require resources to maintain that

can otherwise be used in helpful ways. For example, prayer is effortless. Avoiding prayer takes energy away from our relationship with God which is energy giving and life giving.

Our relationship with the ground that holds us up is also a critical relationship. In the book, *The Last Hunger Season*, recent high school graduate Gideon Wanyama shares his recent discovery about the ground where his family lives: *

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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.

> **Worship Design Team** will be meeting on Monday, March 12th at 6:30pm in the Asbury Library.

> **Leadership Team Meeting**—will meet on Tuesday, March 19th at 6:00pm in the Asbury Library.

> **REMEMBER TO CHANGE YOUR CLOCKS FORWARD ONE HOUR BEFORE GOING TO BED SATURDAY, MARCH 10TH.**

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The Circle of Life

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"I heard that my mother sold a cow to pay school fees so I could finish," he told me. "If there's no grass around my house for the cow to graze, my mom can't have a cow. If there's no cow, there's no income. If there's no income, there's no chance to finish school." He thought silently for a moment. Then he said, "You can see, it is a circle of life."



The Wanvama family lives in the Republic of Kenya in East Africa near the equator. The family provides for itself by farming a small plot of land, raising chickens, milk-

ing a cow or two, and other creative ways that help them to ensure that their children finish high school and are able to climb out of poverty. Gideon learned that our relationship to the the earth we live on matters a great deal. As his family learned how to live in harmony with the land their lives improved. The risk of starvation was reduced substantially.

Their story is also a story of neighboring. A community learning to work together so that everyone's life improves. A community that recognizes that everyone has a role and much to offer. Individuals and families out only for themselves did not improve their circumstances. Our relationships with our neighbors matter. They are life giving and require much less effort than maintaining walls.

Our vision at Asbury is a transformed community. We believe that

God has plans for our well-being so we move forward in faith that God is on the move in our church and in our neighborhood. We believe that transformation begins with worship. Communities that worship together build stronger relationships with each other.

Get connected with us. Even if you already have a church home we are still neighbors in need of each other. If you do not have a church home or if you feel that you are missing out on worship that inspires and helps you connect with God come check us out. You will be glad you did.

Pastor Tommy

* Roger Thurow, *The Last Hunger Season: A Year in an African Farm Community on the Brink of Change*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2012.

The Table ... continued from page 1

With each invitation we search our memory for past experiences that will help us evaluate a gathering that is yet to happen.

An invitation to have dinner at no charge at Davison's newest and most expensive restaurant, the Black Rock, sounds like a "must go" invitation. There is hope in this invitation. A great meal that I otherwise couldn't afford. Perhaps some meaningful conversation.

"The Table" is also a metaphor - a symbol that can mean something much more than a meal. In the song *Come to the Table* the chorus is about an invita-

tion to "Come to the table. Come join the sinners who have been redeemed. Take your place. beside the Savior. Sit down and be set free." We introduced this song a couple months ago on a Sunday when we were having communion. The lyrics really fit. But our table metaphor is bigger than this. This invitation is more than just a meal - even a holy meal.

The table is about an invitation for hope. Not the sort of hope where we anticipate disappointment but hope for something that is certain. While we don't know the details of how our hope will be fulfilled, we know that it will be

awesome. The hope in this invitation stands above all of our attempts to imagine a world with fewer worries, fewer disappointments, less struggle.

The church began with just such an ideal in mind. We catch a glimpse of what is intended in the description of the first church found in Acts 2. The description begins with "*All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.*"

The Table ... continued from page 2

I have had the blessing of seeing the wonders beneath the ocean surface up front and personal. The beauty is so breath-taking that you really have to remember to breathe. The colors are so vivid they take your breath away. I was awestruck.

I feel this way when I see a sunrise or a sunset. I feel this way when I see a



night sky full of stars. I feel this way when I see children playing in church without holding back for fear of punishment. I feel this way in worship when the Holy Spirit connects with my spirit and reminds me of God's awesome power.

I imagine that "potluck" meals were a fixture in the first church. We read that all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. Now "everything" is more than just food in my understanding of this word. But can't you imagine the awesome meals they had together? We are not all chefs.

They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people.

Acts 2:46-47

Not all of us know how to set a table that is breathtaking. But together we can do these things and more - very well.

LENT 2018

THE FLINT AREA UMC'S ARE HOSTING ROTATING LENTEN SERVICES. SERVICES ARE AT 5:00PM WITH 6:00PM LIGHT MEAL SERVED. EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO PARTICIPATE.

DATE:	CHURCH:	ADDRESS:	PREACHING:
March 4	Faith UMC	2266 W. Coldwater Rd., Flint	Pastor Tommy McDoniel
March 11	Calvary UMC	2111 Flushing Rd., Flint	Pastor Sang Chun
March 18	Atherton UMC	4010 Lippincott Blvd, Burton	Pastor Jim Britt
March 25 (Passion/Palm Sunday)	Asbury UMC	1653 Davison Rd, Flint	Pastor Brian Willingham
March 30 (Good Friday - 12N Service)	Hope UMC	4467 Beecher Rd, Flint	TBD

In Our Prayers

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

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

Asbury Worship Series The Heart of Hope ...

We all have a biological father and mother who played a critical role in our coming into existence. Our biological parents are not our creator. Nevertheless, it can be difficult to disconnect the two.

When we pray to “Our Father in heaven” this title that is shared with our earthly father can tarnish the image of our

Book Club News

Our group finished our reading and discussion of *The Hip-Hop Church* written by Pastors Efreem Smith and Phil Jackson. Like the culture it rises from, the hip-hop church is relevant and certainly bold. And it speaks to the heart. This book has offered us practical ideas from hip-hop churches about how to engage and incorporate rap, break dancing, poetry and deejays to worship Jesus and preach his Word.



We are in the *Season of Lent*. A time of preparation as we look forward to our Easter celebration of Christ’s resurrection. In our message for Ash Wednesday we learned a little bit about the tradition of fasting during Lent. That is, giving up something that

has become a little too important to us while we focus on our relationship with God, others, ourselves and our planet. These are life-giving connections which help to keep us in harmonious relationships.

Leadership in Worship & Service

Welcome Team Tony, Mirium, Christine
Children’s Time Rev Tommy
Ushers Anthony, Jim
Production Team Bob
Nursery Norma
Worship Leaders Michele
Coffee Hour

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel Pastor
Mark Vorenkamp Children & Youth
Jim Craig Leadership Chair

perception of God even in the best of circumstances. For too many, it can take a life time of therapy to undo the damage that this confusion causes. We know that God the Father is ours and everyone else’s Creator but our connection to our biological parents gets in the way.

Welcome to our worship series, *The heart of hope*. During this six week series we will both explore some of the struggles that keep us from a relation-

We hope that you will join us on Tuesdays at Noon. On March 6, we will discuss what we learned about the Hip Hop culture and how what we learned might help us to reach more youth and young adults with the good news of Jesus Christ. We begin a new study the following Tuesday, March 13. Our next topic will be a book recommended by Israel Unger, *The Last Hunger Season*.

In western Kenya, the *Luhya* people customarily name their children for the time of year in which they are born. Francis Mamati, a smallholder farmer shares this about his birth month: “I think it must be May or June...because my mother gave me a third name: *Wanjala*,...our word for hunger, for the time of year when we run low on food. The hunger season. And that is usually May and June.”

Wanjala, or hunger, is real in many parts of the world. Many of us heard references to “starving children in Africa” as children when we refused to eat our peas or whatever food item we were offered but preferred not to eat. Africa’s smallholder farmers, most of whom are women, know misery. They toil in a time warp, living and working essentially as their ancestors did a century ago. With tired seeds, meager soil nutrition, primitive storage facilities, wretched roads, and no capital or

ship with God that helps us get through the week and explore practical solutions for dealing with our struggles. Whether you find it hard to believe in God or you are a

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credit, they harvest less than one-quarter the yields of Western farmers.

The small family farms that award-winning author and world hunger activist Roger Thurow witnessed in Kenya was a horror scene of malnourished children, backbreaking manual work, and profound hopelessness. For these families, growing food is their driving preoccupation, and still they don’t have enough to feed their families throughout the year. The *wanjala*—the annual hunger season that can stretch from one month to as many as eight or nine—comes out of a lack of possibilities.

But in January 2011, a woman named *Leonida* and her neighbors came together and took the enormous risk of trying to change their lives. Roger Thurow spent a year with four of them—*Leonida Wanyama, Rasoa Wasike, Francis Mamati, and Zipporah Biketi*—to both witness and to share their stories. In *The Last Hunger Season*, we read about the profound challenges these farmers and their families faced, and follow their stories through the seasons to see whether, with a little bit of help from a new social enterprise organization called *One Acre Fund*, they might transcend lives of severe poverty and hunger.

The daily dramas of the farmers’ lives unfold against the backdrop of a looming global challenge: to feed a growing population, world food production must nearly double by 2050. If these farmers succeed, so might we all.

We encourage you to come to our Tuesday gatherings. Our small group hopes 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. And we are always on the lookout for our next book, video lesson or topic. Your participation and suggestions are greatly appreciated.

Pastor Tommy

* Thurow, Roger. *The Last Hunger Season: A Year in an African Farm Community on the Brink of Change*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2012.

The Heart of Hope ... *continued from page 4*



lifetime believer this series will challenge you and offer you hope for a more joyful life. If you don't feel that the church is relevant to you take a chance and come see what *The heart of hope* is all about.

We will begin our series on a Sunday that has been designated by the traditional church as the first Sunday in Lent. The idea of Lent is a season of preparation. Easter is right around the corner and in preparation for this celebration of Christ's victory over death we take a look at where we stand in our relationship with God and pursue ways to get closer to God.

This series will take us through a process of self-examination along

with offering practical advice on steps that we can take to strengthen our relationship with Christ.

Feb 18 The Table invitation, belonging

Mar 4 The Boat searching, isolation

Mar 11 The Cliff at the edge of a decision that is life threatening or life giving

Mar 18 The Lagoon failed attempts

Mar 25 The Cave hiding, secluded, isolated

Apr 1 The Feast Celebration of hope found in the Christ's victory over death

Coming up this week

Neighborhood Deliveries/Water/Food

Mar 5 Mon 4:30pm StandUp Education Prog

Mar 6 Tues 12N Pastor Book Club

Mar 7 Wed 1:00pm UMW

4:30pm StandUp Education Prog

6:00pm Beginners Bible Study

6:30pm Asbury Youth

Mar 9 Fri 4:30pm StandUp Education Prog

Mar 10 Sat 1-4pm StandUp Education Prog

Mar 11 Sun 9:30am Café Opens
10:30am New Beginnings
Contemporary Worship

Last Week for Worship

Attendance 38 Offering \$ 1,370

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.

****All ladies of Asbury are invited to join the United Methodist Women. We meet the 1st Wednesday of each month at 1:00pm in the Wesley Room. March 7th will be a potluck luncheon at 12Noon and meeting at 1pm.**

Come be a part of the Asbury Mission Team. If you have any questions, please call Michele Weston at 810-694-6266. Hope to see you on the 7th!

Michele



Prayer is at the heart of our beliefs

Welcome to the Asbury Community

1653 Davison Road
Flint, MI 48506



Phone: 810-235-0016
Fax: 810-235-0016 (call first when faxing)
E-mail: FlintAsbury@gmail.com

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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.

The Table Continued from page 3

One of the things they did in the first church causes wealthy people to squirm in their seats. We read that in the first church "the people sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need." This is where it becomes really important to consider what this means in a culture of private property and the "American dream" to get ahead. If you own your own home it is safe to read on.

This subject deserves much more discussion than a simple, literal reading offers. As does all of scripture. But we should never water scripture down to suit our preferences.

We were created for worship. This is who we are. When we don't worship we have an emptiness that can never be filled with any thing

else. The first church seemed to understand this. We read that the people "worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the

Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people."

But what if "he or she" is also invited and will be at the same table? Well both he and she are also

invited by the One who invites us to the table. "Come and see" Jesus says to each of us.

"Follow Me" is the essence of His invitation. You are invited.

Pastor Tommy