



ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Welcome to the Asbury Community

Just Say No?

“Just say no?” What a compelling argument that we offer our children and each other to resist making decisions that are likely to have bad consequences. Its easy - right? Someone offers our teenager a chance to get high and they refuse the offer by simply saying ‘no’. Unfortunately, their success depends to a large extent on how well they have seen their parents and other adult role models handle how they answer tempting offers that are not good for them. Ouch!

The Lagoon

A lagoon is a shallow body of water separated from the sea by some barrier and immersed in the sounds and dark shadows of the tropical wilderness. The water is still and dark and full of predators waiting for their next meal. Armand Marie Leroi in her non-fiction book, *The Lagoon: How Aristotle*

Our answer depends on a lot of factors, many of which we are mostly powerless to do anything about. We get a lot of help determining how we answer temptation beyond our parents and other adult role-models, who for the most part, are not very good role models on their better days. Worse, most don’t realize their own failings. They are more focused on the failings of others. Again - ouch!

My first example set up a scenario of a first time temptation. What

Invented Science, argues that the ancient philosopher, Aristotle, first discovered the scientific method as he combined his love for nature with his ability to reason, documenting life in a lagoon. On Aristotle’s island home of *Lesbos*, he carefully observed and documented what he saw in the lagoon located on this island.

Another book called simply, *The Lagoon*, is a fictional

about those temptations where we have said ‘yes’ more times than we care to recall, even when we promised ourselves that this time will be different. And history repeats. And we may feel exhilarated with our decision - which is why saying ‘no’ is so hard. And history repeats itself and our exhilaration is short-lived as a familiar feeling returns - shame. Next time will be different.

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book of intrigue, drama and love, written by Joseph Conrad. His book brings drama to life as his main character, *Arsat*, must choose when he sees his brother fall in battle, and is faced with a choice to go back to help his brother, which could end in death or live on to be with the love of his life, *Diamelen*. He must therefore choose between love and honor, fidelity and betrayal. In effect, he can carry off his love only at the price of cowardice. In choosing love, that noblest attribute of man, he has paradoxically chosen dishonor.

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Volume 18 Issue 18
March 18, 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.

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

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The Lagoon *...continued from Page 1*

It can be said, hence the title of the book, that Arsat is in a lagoon. In this regard the lagoon is a metaphor for the human condition, a symbol of the dark uncertainty of motive. The lagoon is a psychological state of confusion. It is dark and you are surrounded by predators, most of which you cannot see. The way out is obscured by heavy vegetation. If you stay in the lagoon long enough you will surely look for isolation in the cave that can be found behind the waterfall.



The literary website eNotes.com describes the ending of the book where the book gets its title:

At the very end of the story, Arsat is motionless, staring beyond the sunlight "into the darkness of a world of illusions." What is illusory is not love or courage or cowardice, but human beings' ability to act purely, to conduct their lives without contradictory emotions or damnable choices. Significantly, Arsat's love of Diamelen allows him to see nothing but

her face, hear nothing but her voice, and after her death he tells the white man that he can see nothing. "There is nothing," the white man responds—nothing but illusion, uncertainty, and the darkness of an impenetrable lagoon.

The analysis of the book continues with a discussion of the importance of the lagoon as a metaphor.

The setting of the lagoon is the perfect embodiment of the illusory world of man's actions...It is a place immersed in the sounds and dark shadows of the tropical wilderness...the lagoon is a symbol of evil, a malign force, aggressive and alive, like a predator. It is not a personal malignity...but a menace that exists independently of human beings' actions.

The lagoon is a metaphor for the human condition, a symbol of the dark uncertainty of motive. It is a psychological entity, suggestive of a confused state of mind. We enter the lagoon when we choose to step off a cliff—we make a choice that becomes habitual that we will surely regret and we find ourselves in a place that we want to leave, and we try our

best, but our best isn't enough. We feel trapped in our own lack of will power.

The lagoon is the "failure place" where we all make promises to God. Have you found yourself in a lagoon? What are some of your "lagoon promises" to God? How do you try to earn your way back into God's favor? A lagoon experience will always be messy and never resolves without pain. And making sincere promises won't eliminate the consequences of bad choices.

Repentance becomes the most beautiful word you can find. But your repentance cannot be one that requires more self-effort or one that beats you up. Repentance isn't doing something about our sin; it is admitting that we can't do anything about our sin. True repentance is fully dependent upon God.

Repentance fully trusts in God's power to erase your shame and self-disgust. It is tapping into greatest power in the universe and believing that this power can cleanse you of the results of your choices, redeem you and give you power to no longer stay in the lagoon. It is powerful enough to break the spell of this madness.

God is good—all the time and lived among people so that we might know the depths of His love. Salvation is a gift that we can never earn. Accept the gift of Jesus Christ in your life.

Pastor Tommy

*Armand Marie Leroi. *The Lagoon: How Aristotle Invented Science*. New York: Penguin Books, 2014.

*the end, I will lose.
Every time."*

Think of this moment as a "cliff" and your decision is whether to jump or turnaround and walk away. Why a cliff? Dramatic yes. Generally, jumping off a cliff is our last jump but most temptations are not life-ending - or so we convince ourselves of this lie.

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Just Say No? *... continued from page 1*

Let's consider how Dr. Dan Allender, founder of the Seattle School of Theology & Psychology, describes what happens to us as we face temptation. Dr. Allender is an expert in trauma and abuse therapy and earned his Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from Michigan State University.

Out of the blue, something triggers your attention. A billboard, a memory, a hurtful statement, a social media comment, the wisp of an image. It doesn't have to be much. Just

enough to catch your heart off-guard. Just enough to catch your eye—something seditiously attractive—enough to set the hook.

Then your self-story begins to replay itself. Your shame forms the lies and predicts the outcome. "Here we go again. Every time this hits, I will fail. Sure, I'll fight it for a moment or two. Or maybe even a long while. But in

Just Say No? ... *continued from page 2*

The problem is that we convince ourselves that it is not a steep cliff with rocks and waves below - a sure plunge to our death. Instead, it is a tiny cliff - like a step really. No harm - no foul (an old basketball saying to justify a sharp elbow but where the victim is still breathing).

Then the temptation hits. A real opportunity. A choice to actively do something wrong. It's no longer just a vague potential in your head. Here comes the

whisper inside you: "You know you want it. You deserve it. You have not been treated well by God or the significant others in your life. And God does not seem to be able to help you with this stuff anyway. Just say 'yes' and the gears will get rolling. You don't even have to admit to yourself that you made the choice. Just say 'yes'."

Now the crime is set in motion. There is an actual place and time or perhaps even a person.



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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:		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
Virginia Bigger	Elizabeth Wright
Barbara McIvor	Judy Tanner
Jonathon Misner	Mary Lyons
Nancy Auger	Brenda
Austin & Mary Suffle	Vera Nichols

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

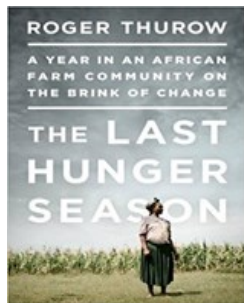
Asbury Worship Series The Heart of Hope ...

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	Bob, Jim
Production Team	Bob
Nursery	Carolyn
Worship Leaders	Cyndi
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.

Coming up this week

Neighborhood Deliveries/Water/Food

Mar 19 Mon 4:30pm StandUp Education Prog
6:00pm Leadership Team Mtg

Mar 20 Tues 12Noon Pastor Book Club

Mar 21 Wed 4-8pm Neighborhood Engagement Hub
4:30pm StandUp Education Prog
6:00pm Beginners Bible Study
6:30pm Asbury Youth

Mar 22 Thur 11-3pm Gen Conservation District

Mar 23 Fri 4:30pm StandUp Education Prog

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

Mar 24 Sat 1-4pm StandUp Education Prog

Mar 25 Sun 9:30am Café Opens
10:30am New Beginnings Contemporary Worship

Last Week for Worship Attendance 29 Offering \$ 5,482

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

Email announcements by the Friday before to:

FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com

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

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

"If we claim we have no sin we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness."

1 John 1:8-9

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.

Just Say No? Continued from page

You're trying to fight the sin you've already given yourself permission to carry out. And the longer you fight it, the more the anticipated pleasure of the event increases. What a trap.

Unless and until this comes to the light, you will always, inevitably, invariably lose. You will act out. Period.

So what's a person to do? Just give up and give in? Why does God put us into this situation - tests which we are guaranteed to fail? Consider this possibility: God gives us freedom to love, but without the choice to say 'no' there is no meaning to saying 'yes'. Let me repeat that: God gives each of us the freedom to love but without the choice to say 'no' there is no meaning to saying 'yes'.

In the story of the lost (prodigal) son Jesus tells us about a man with two sons

who receive their inheritance and one son leaves town to go on his own only to find himself. Soon the son has nothing to show for his efforts. He was living with the pigs - the animals not just untidy friends (although pig could be a metaphor). He was faced with a decision. Does he return home and ask to be treated as one of the servants realizing he does not deserve to be called his father's son any longer? Shame had taken over but his humility would serve him well.

The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him... "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, "Father...I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant."'

Luke 15:16-19

Home. This is the place of our roots. While the actual place for some of us may bring back bad feelings, consider home as the place you know you belong. Home is your 'no' to temptation and your 'yes' to turning away from the cliff and into the arms of God.

Do you find yourself standing at the edge of a cliff? Faced with a decision to say 'no' are you anticipating failing? A life of freedom begins with a decision to say 'yes' to Jesus Christ. it doesn't end there. There are cliffs facing us every day and staying connected with God requires that we make an effort to stay connected - to say yes with our time and resources. Join us for worship, for Bible study and in blessing others through our various ministries.

Just say 'yes.'

Pastor Tommy

* William Paul Young, Jackie Hill Perry, Dr. Dan Allender, Jay Stringer, John and Stasi Eldredge. *Heart of Man Participant's Guide*, October 9, 2017.